

SELECT
DISCOURSES

ON

MORAL *and* RELIGIOUS
SUBJECTS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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DISCOURSE

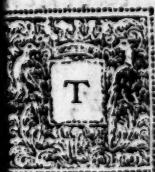


DISCOURSE I.

The Disposition necessary for receiving Truth.

EPHES. iv. 15.

---- *But speaking the Truth in Love.*



THE Apostle, in these few Words, recommends to us every thing that can render our Natures truly valuable, and blessed ; every thing that can perfect our Beings, and improve our Happiness.

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B

Our

The Disposition necessary

Our two governing and directive Powers are the *Understanding*, and the *Will*. The Discovery of *Truth* and the *Enjoyment* of *Good* employ our whole Capacity. And when these two Powers have their free Scope and Exercise, when they mutually assist and administer to each other, the Whole is orderly and excellent: But if either takes upon it, to act without a due regard to the other, Disorder and Misery, internal and external, must necessarily ensue.

How closely soever these two Powers are united, and, as it were, wedded together into one Spirit; and how much soever what is *excellent* and *orderly* depends upon their conjugal Harmony; yet we know, by too fatal Experience, that they often separate, and pursue different and interfering Interests, and Pleasures; and that *such a State* is always attended with domestick Discord, intestine
Jars,

Jars, and Self-upbraidings. But when the Understanding is engaged in the Search of Truth; and Love is shed abroad in our Hearts; then it is that we are full of Grace and Truth; then it is that Righteousness and Peace kiss each other; then are we the Temples of God who dwelleth between these Cherubims.

What has been hitherto said, by way of general Introduction only, will appear with sufficient Evidence from a particular Enquiry into the Import or Meaning of the Apostle's Words—*Speaking the Truth in Love*—which I shall now proceed to make under the three following Heads.

First, I shall enquire what we are here to understand by *Speaking the Truth*.

Secondly, What it is to speak the Truth in Love: And,

B 2

Thirdly,

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Thirdly, What the Connection between these two Branches may be, and their Consequences when they meet or are united together.

First then, the original Word (*ἀληθεύοντες*) which is here translated *speaking the Truth*, seems to be much more significant and comprehensive; it ought not to be limited to the *Act of the Tongue*; it more immediately relates to the Exercise of the *Understanding*, and signifies to pursue or search after Truth. It is very evident, that the Particular in which we excel all the other Creatures upon the Earth is our *Understanding*. In every other thing we find one or other of them very superior to us. 'Tis *this only* that gives us the Pre-eminence in the Scale or Gradation of Beings. There is not one of those Powers, which we enjoy in common with the inferior Part of the Creation but is attended with its special Advan-

tage

rages and Pleasures; and we are generally at full Liberty to exercise them without Reserve. Our *Reason* only (our *chief Endowment*, given us to preside over, to guide and regulate all the rest) has been denied the free Exercise of its Faculties, has been represented as a dangerous Power fitter to be extinguish'd than exerted. The Eye may range through the infinite Variety of Objects provided for it; may continually entertain it self with new Wonders; may call in the Assistances of Art to reach the more *distant*, and to perceive the *minutest* Objects; whilst the Mind of Man, tho' form'd for a nobler Light, for a more extensive and delightful Scene, has been check'd in its most natural and important Searches; and *Inactivity* as well as *Darkness* have been deem'd its most suitable Entertainment. But as this is, I thank God, far from being the Case of our Country at present,

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I shall not pursue this Observation any further. Whatever Darknes worse than *Egyptian*, whatever spiritual Blindness, our superstitious Neighbours (those of the Church of *Rome* especially) still groan under, we of this Church and Nation, it must be allowed, have the free Exercise of this most valuable Branch of Liberty, and so far at least have *Light* in all our Dwellings.

But to proceed ---- It is evident not only from our internal Experience of the *Peace* and *Perfection* of our Minds, and from what we daily see promoting or disturbing the *external Order* and *Happiness* of Society, but also from the *Instructions* left us by *him, who was the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, that *Moral* and *Religious Truths* do above all others deserve our Attention and Diligence. For how easy would it have been for *him*, by whom God made the Worlds, and
who

who upholdeth all things by the Word of his Power, to have unfolded to us all the Mysteries of Nature, which must of Necessity be very familiar to him who first made and still upholds them? Whereas these are the things he has entirely overlook'd, and confin'd his Instructions to Matters of *Morality* and *Religion only*, as being the most important and beneficial.

Now notwithstanding these *moral* and *religious Truths* have been acknowledged in all Ages to be the principal Concern of Mankind, and have, in consequence thereof, been their common and chief Study; notwithstanding there have been innumerable Volumes written concerning them; Books which the whole World could scarce contain; notwithstanding God has from the Beginning taken this Matter into his own Hands, and given forth his moral and religious Instructions in a Succession of Revelations;

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lations; notwithstanding there has been a constant *Order* of Men set apart for the sole Business of *explaining*, and *enforcing* these Revelations; notwithstanding we live in an Age and Nation, as I observ'd before, in which the utmost Liberty of Enquiry and Debate is allow'd, practis'd and gloried in; notwithstanding all this, it is but too evident that *many* of these important Truths are not, to this Day, generally and rightly understood. Disputes about them are scarce less various, than if we were but just entering upon our first Enquiries; as tho' Mankind were doom'd to be toss'd to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine; to be *always learning and never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.*

It must indeed be own'd, that Mankind are at this time, where they have Liberty, very inquisitive after Truth; and that almost every Sett of Men
think

think themselves in the full Possession of it. But this, instead of putting a stop to our Enquiry, is the thing which, above all others, should set us to work, and quicken our Diligence: Where *all* oppose each other, and are equally satisfied in their several Persuasions, *all* but *one* at the most, must be in the wrong: And the Security of *all* in this Case is the Danger of *all*, and what ought in Reason, tho' 'tis not expected it should in fact, excite *all* to a Re-examination.

The little that has been said on this Subject, may suffice to shew us, what is meant by *speaking the Truth* in this Passage of St. Paul, and to convince us that the Apostle's Exhortation is *as* applicable to *us*, *as* it could well be to *those* to whom it was more immediately directed. I now proceed as I propos'd to shew ---

Secondly, what is to be understood by speaking and searching after the Truth in Love.

Love

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Love, in the Writings of the New Testament, is a Term of the utmost Importance; it every where occurs; it is declared to be the *end of the Commandment*, and the *fulfilling of the Law*; it is therefore absolutely necessary that we have the most distinct Idea of the true Import of this Term, and that we possess our selves of whatsoever it denotes or implies.

I observe then, that the Term Love in the New-Testament is us'd in a *peculiar Sense*, such as is not to be found in any other Writings. When it is said that *neither Circumcision availeth any thing in Christ Jesus, nor Uncircumcision, but Faith which worketh by Love* --- That Knowledge puffeth up, but Charity or Love edifieth --- and, in the Words of the Text, that we should search after the *Truth in Love*, we see the Term Love is us'd in a *general and unrestrained Sense*, without any particular Object assign'd it. In

I Cor.

1 Cor. xiii. where St. Paul gives us a very large and beautiful Description of Love, it is in this general Way: Love, says he, *suffereth long and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up, doth not behave it self unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked; thinketh no Evil, rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things* ----- St. Paul here seems rather to set forth a *System of Virtues* than to describe a single Affection restrain'd to a particular Object. If we look back into our Lord's History, we shall see how this Usage of the Term *Love* was introduced, and what was the special Import of it. Our Lord in his last Discourse with his Disciples, immediately before he was betrayed, gives them a *new Commandment* which is several times repeated in that Discourse, *That they should*

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should love one another as he had loved them. Greater Love hath no Man than this, that he lay down his life for his Friends ---- By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples. Now as this is the new Commandment of Christianity; the grand Characteristick of Christ's Disciples; as it comprehends in it all Virtue; the Discharge of all Offices; so was it very natural for the Disciples of Christ, in After-ages, to use the Term Love in the general Way they did; and to intend by it that Love which our Lord exemplify'd towards his Disciples, and which he commanded them to have to one another.

To search after *the Truth in Love* then, is to do it with the same Mind or Temper which was also in Christ Jesus, in *his* disinterested Love and most generous Benevolence.

The Connexion between this Love, and the Discovery of Truth, as before explain'd, together with the Consequences

quences of their Union, is what remains in the third and last Place to be consider'd.

And, *First*, I observe that a Connexion between these two is more than intimated in many other Passages of the Scripture. St. Paul prays for the *Ephesians* (Ch. iii. Ver. 17.) that *being rooted and grounded in Love, they might be able to comprehend with all Saints, &c.* And again, *Phil. i. 9, 10.* and *this I pray, that your Love may abound yet more and more in Knowledge and in all Judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent.* St. Paul says of the *Romans*, Ch. xv. Ver. 14. that they were *full of Goodness, filled with all Knowledge, and able to admonish one another, and St. Peter commands to add to our Faith Virtue, and to Virtue Knowledge.* St. John saith, *He that saith he is in the Light and hateth his Brother, is in Darknes even until now;*

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now; he that loveth his Brother abideth in the Light, and there is none Occasion of stumbling in him, 1 John ii. 9, 10.—

Now where such a Connexion and Dependance of things is so frequently and openly declared, it plainly demands a strict Attention and Enquiry. That Love, Goodness and Virtue are introductory to Light, Knowledge, and Judgment, appears very plainly from the fore-cited Passages.

I observe further, that the Business of *John* the Baptist, and our Lord's Ministry were not to teach their Disciples Systems of Truth *immediately*, but *gradually* to settle this Love as a *Habit* in their Hearts, which would induce that Spirit which was to guide them into all Truth; to teach Men to regulate their Affections; to exercise them daily with Trials proper to carry them on from Strength to Strength; and by this means to give them

them a Love of Truth, a moral Dis-
cernment of Offices, and a Power of
forming their Manners accordingly;
this, I say, is a very different thing
from meerly laying before them a Sy-
stem of moral and religious Offices,
and then leaving them to themselves,
without any further Steps, to act up
to such Institutions.

John, whose Business it was to
prepare the way for him who came
after, taught them *Repentance*, which
was plainly nothing else but an actual
Reformation of their *known Vices*; a
very obvious, but necessary Begin-
ning; and which needed no mighty
Works to support or enforce it. Our
Lord who came after, and, as is ve-
ry evident, chose his *own* out of
John's Disciples, advanc'd them into
a higher School, and introduced a
greater Refinement of their Tempers
and Affections. What they were to
learn of him was, to forsake all; to
become

become as little Children; to be meek and lowly of Heart. There are no Systems of Doctrine to be found, no subtil Reasonings, no first Principles laid down, no regular Series of Deductions drawn from them; these things seem to be every where industriously avoided.

On the other hand, What is the Reason assign'd of the Unbelief of the *Jews* but the *Hardness of their Hearts*, their *not being our Lord's Sheep*, that is, the Irregularity of their Dispositions? In other things they were allow'd to be wise and prudent. 'Tis plain also, that our Lord's Disciples had imbib'd all the common Prejudices of their Nation, and that they continued in the grossest Errors even 'till after his Crucifixion; they cou'd have nothing but an honest and good Heart to endear them to their Lord, and give them that *Distinction* with the common Lover of Mankind;
nothing

nothing but their being *Israelites indeed*, in whom was no Guile; nothing but their babe-like Dispositions, to procure them those special Revelations which were withheld from the *wise and Prudent*.

Let us but consider the Reason of the Thing itself, the *Circumstances* of Mankind; and we shall clearly perceive the Connexion betwixt *Love* and the Discovery of moral and religious Truth; and that the Method made use of by our Saviour was the most suitable to the Circumstances of Mankind.

First, It is very plain that irregular Dispositions, and immoral Habits do not only hinder our Attention, but give us strong Aversions to those Truths which are irreconcilable to them; and make us Enemies to those who tell us *such Truths*. Now it must be very difficult to convey moral

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Truths

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Truths to Men who will not regulate these their Dispositions.

But *Secondly*, Suppose such Men could be convinc'd of a System of such moral and religious Truths, what would be the Consequence? They must hold the Truth in Unrighteousness, and their Sin must become exceeding sinful. The generality of Men, even of the most Ignorant, know more than they care to practise. The Defect is not in their Understandings. If they have Obstinacy enough to resist their Conversions in a few, and those perhaps of easy Duties, it would only increase their Obstinacy to teach them more Duties, and especially more difficult ones.

Thirdly, Let us suppose farther, that Men of irregular Dispositions were not only taught moral and religious Duties, but, by some external Force

and Terrors, compell'd to an outward Compliance with them; 'tis true, Social Order might be somewhat preserv'd and kept up in such a Case, but all Personal Merit and Virtue would be excluded and destroy'd on such a Supposition.

On the other hand, where the Affections are apply'd to in the *first* place, and *gradually* regulated, 'till they arrive at that generous Love and Benevolence here enjoin'd, and exemplify'd by our blessed Saviour, all our Interests in Error are remov'd; the Mind is emancipated and made free; stands equally open to Conviction; is prepar'd to receive any Truth; and joyfully to embrace any Office; and those Actions which flow from such a Principle, must be of all others the most meritorious and praise-worthy.

It may perhaps be urg'd here, that this Refinement of the Affections implies a Knowledge of all moral Duties,

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and cannot be arriv'd at without a previous Instruction in them. But this seems to be a Mistake, and to arise from an Ignorance of human Nature. 'Tis true indeed, this is a Work not to be carried on without some Instructions; and 'tis agreed Men cannot live in the World without some Knowledge of Duty; but our Affections are to be considered in the first Place as personal and domestick, as things in which our own personal Happiness and Perfection are immediately concern'd; and Men are to be wrought upon in the first place by their own personal Interest in them; the Good or Evil which flows from them to others, is a secondary thing, and will have but little Weight with us, but as it happens to suit our own personal Happiness or Misery, so that the natural Foundation of Instructions in the Regulation of our Affections is their Advantages with
regard

regard to our selves ; which is the Method our Lord observes through his whole Sermon on the Mount, and particularly in the *Beatitudes*. This generous Benevolence leads us at once into the easy and free Practice of all Offices, such Offices as the Philosophers of old never thought of, and such as in fact fill'd the Heathen World with Surprize and Wonder.

From what has been said, the Meaning of the Terms made use of by the Apostle, and their Connexion, I hope has been made to appear ; I chose to begin my Office * with this Particular, as it is beginning with *the Beginning*, and is of the utmost Importance, tho' too much overlook'd and disregarded.

There is indeed much ado about Truth, many Controversies carried on with Zeal and Warmth ; but

* *Divinity-Lecturer in the Cathedral Church of Chichester.*

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what is the Issue of all this? Are the Professors of Christianity more united in their Persuasions, or improv'd in their Mannets? No, the Increase of Differences and the Growth of Immorality are the Complaint of all. Are Unbelievers convinced? No. We are surpris'd at the Boldness, and Progress of Infidelity. And thus it must be where there is neither a proper Capacity for teaching or hearing the Truth. The end of the Commandment, says St. Paul, is *Charity or Love, out of a pure Heart and of a good Conscience, and of Faith unfeigned, from which some having swerv'd, have turn'd aside unto vain Jangling, desiring to be Teachers of the Law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.* The Christian Church has been for a long Time a School of *Controversy* rather than of *moral Discipline*; we abound in that Knowledge which puffeth up; which is the Mother of
Pride;

side; by which cometh Contention; which serves only to heighten and aggravate the Irregularity of our own and other Men's Affections. As for that Love which edifieth, 'tis almost unknown in the World; if it be to be found any where, it resides chiefly, as heretofore, amongst the mean, the base and despised things of the World. It is indeed the greatest Folly to expect that primitive *Unity*, or any other *ancient Fruits* of Christianity should revive and flourish, unless we return to our *first Love*, and preserve this Unity of the Spirit, as the Bond of Peace, as a Disposition to all further Improvements in Truth and Virtue.





DISCOURSE II.

The Causes of Aversion to Truth.

JOHN viii. 45.

*Because I tell you the Truth ye believe
me not.*



THE Account here given us of the Unbelief of the *Jews* must, at the first hearing, strike every Man with Surprise. *Truth* is the natural Object of our Understandings, the Discovery of it is the common Labour and Concern of all rational Beings, neither is their Industry and Emu-

imulation so great in any other Particular. And now that this same Truth should become the Aversion of the Intellect, a Cause of Unbelief, say, so powerful a Cause, as to prompt the *Jews* to murder the Man that told them the Truth, seems to carry with it the Air of a Paradox at least, if not of a palpable Contradiction. But the Reason which our Lord gives of this strange Behaviour of theirs, will remove the Difficulty. He tells them they were Children of their Father the Devil, and the Lusts of their Father they would do; he was a Murderer from the Beginning, and *abode not in the Truth*, because there is no Truth in him, for he is a Liar and the Father of it; and because I tell you the Truth, says he, ye believe me not.

It was confess'd they had one Father, even God; that they particularly descended from the Line of *Abraham*; but

but they had contracted such Dispositions and Habits of Mind, as made them love a Lye, relish Falsities, and hate the Truth; a monstrous Depravity, a manifest Inversion of human Nature!

From hence this melancholy Observation will arise (*viz.*) That Mankind may so far corrupt their Natures as to believe and love a Lye, or become Enemies to the Truth.

Upon this I shall,

First, Somewhat enlarge more particularly,

Secondly I shall more fully enquire into the Reason which our Lord here assigns for it; and

Thirdly, Into the proper Methods of preventing and correcting it.

First then, I shall somewhat enlarge upon this Observation, that Mankind may so far debase and corrupt their Na-

tures as to believe and love a Lye,
become Enemies to the Truth.

A *known Falshood* can indeed be no
re assented to by the *Understanding*,
then a *sensible Evil* can be embraced
by the *Will*. The latter is not more
naturally attach'd to what it esteems
Happiness, than the former is to what
appears to be *Truth*; to these they re-
spectively incline, like the Needle to
the Pole, by a necessary Instinct and
direction. 'Tis inconsistent with the
Divine Nature to form any Being for
Misery, or to give it Appetites after
Evil and Falshood; but yet we can
change our Natures, and misguide
our Faculties, as to put *Darkness for*
Light and *Evil for Good*; insomuch,
that what is the real Misery of our
bright Nature, may be the only
good it is capable of enjoying in its
depravity; a fatal Liberty this, but not
peculiar to Man. The Devils are repre-
sented as such Beings; and those Men
are

The Causes of

are not improperly styl'd their Children, who are Enemies to all Righteousness, full of Subtilty and Mischief, and *Perversers of the Right Way of the Lord*. That Mankind should have a Power over their Faculties, exerting and applying them variously is necessary to constitute them *Free Agents*; that there should be some Difficulty, some Industry and Application requir'd in the right Use of them is further necessary to make them *virtuous*, and Creatures capable of Rewards. But that the Byass should draw so forcibly the wrong Way, that the Balance should be so unequally pois'd that many, very many, should almost totally abuse their Powers, destroy their Happiness, and defeat the End of their Creation, and but few (very few indeed of so numerous and fruitful Species) should seek the goodly Pearls and so trade with their Talents as to enter into the Joy of their Lord; this is a Case hard to resolve!

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The wiser Heathens imagin'd that
human Nature had undergone and
suffer'd some great Change for the
worse, and hoped for a Time when
it should be reinstated in its original
Power and Perfection. But the great
misfortune is, that we who have the
History of this great Revolution, and
the Means provided by Revelation to
oppose it, seem only to have
better Notions of Things, and the
empty Privilege of boasting of a su-
perior Knowledge and Information;
but all this while our Virtue, our
Manners and Behaviour, do not rise
in a due Proportion; the *Light which*
in us is Darkness, and how great
therefore is that Darkness! The Dege-
neracy of the Heathen World is sur-
prising enough, but how much more
must that of the Christians be?
It is very certain, that either Revela-
tion has not provided *Means* suffi-
cient to enable Mankind to discover
and

and discharge their Duty; or, if it has, that Men do generally either neglect or misunderstand *those Means*.

Without any further Enlargement or Aggravations of this Matter, I shall proceed to enquire

Secondly, Into the Reason of it which our Lord here assigns.

This Behaviour of the *Jews*, their Enmity to Truth, our Lord ascribes to their being Children of the Devil, to those Evil-habits they had contracted, and were govern'd by; for *in this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil; whosoever doth not Righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his Brother, 1 Joh. iii. 10.*—

'Tis evident and obvious enough, that Happiness is the supreme View of Mankind; and further, that according to the Happiness we propose to ourselves, must our Faculties be employ'd; every particular kind of
Happiness

Happiness requiring particular Means; forming in us a particular Sett of Manners; drawing after them a suitable Train of Actions. Now when Men seek their Happiness in the Indulgence of one or more particular Appetites, those Appetites must become the governing Powers, dictating to the rest, and forcing them all into their Service. Hence the Understanding is not suffer'd to contemplate or propose any thing, but in Subordination to the Will; or if it should at times suggest any thing disagreeable to our Inclinations and Passions, they suppress and silence it as soon as possible.

The Knowledge of Truth is the Discovery of the Natures of Things, and of their Relations to each other; *Moral* Truth is the Relation of Things to the Happiness of Mankind. As Men alter their Natures, so all things around them must stand in different
Rela-

Relations to them, and the same Things appear in as many Lights as Men have acquired Corruptions.

Hence it is that though all have the same common Nature, yet almost all pursue different Pleasures, and relish differently the same Objects. Hence it is that, though all have the same Faculties of Perception, the same things which appear clear and undeniable to some, have no Evidence at all with others; that the same Word, which is to some Foolishness and an Offence, is to others the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.

If we have erred in our Choice of Happiness, every thing subsequent to this fundamental Mistake must of consequence be Error. 'Tis not fit we should receive any thing as Truth, or admit any thing as fit and right to be done by us, which falls not in with our Scheme of Happiness; and
where

where this is laid out by Appetite, Appetite must and will judge, govern and direct. We can relish nothing but when it is suited to its Palate, every thing else is irksome and offensive; we are always prepar'd to disbelieve that disagreeable Counsellour who tells us the Truth, and would rob us of our Enjoyments. It is in this way, we establish a *Law* in our *Members* which wars against the *Law* in our *Minds*, and brings us into *Captivity* to the *Law* of Sin which is in our *Members*, Rom. vii. 23. 'Tis in this way we bring our selves under a kind of moral Necessity of disbelieving the Truth; when we speak of a Lye we speak of our own, that is, we speak according to the Indisposition of our Natures, and the false Light in which we see the Relations of things. Pleasures work insensibly upon our Understandings, and draw them into their Interests, and reconcile us by Degrees

The Causes of

to those things which might once appear absurd and shocking; They model our Reasonings, cause the *deaf Ear* and *hard Heart*, and bind us up in those Chains of Darknels which many will never disentangle themselves from to all Eternity. It is our *Pleasures* that make us hate those Truths which are suggested to us by our own Minds, and enrage our Passions when they are press'd upon us by others. Whatsoever countenances them is sweet and delightful to us, but every Whisper of Thought against them is suppress'd by the Powers enthron'd, as seditious and traiterous. Alas! did wise and good Men (I mean those that are in some measure such) see and know what little things influence and govern them by means of their Passions, they would be astonished at their own Weakness; but these things are hid from our Eyes; we often see them in others, but very seldom in ourselves.

I come in the third and last Place, to consider the proper Method of preventing and correcting this great Evil.

To bring Creatures beset with so many Frailties and Infirmities to some good Degree of Strength and Steadiness, to make them love, understand and conform to the Truth, to promote their own and each other's real Happiness, is a Work worthy of God to take into *his* Hands, worthy of *our* utmost Attention and Application. St. Paul complain'd that what he did he allowed not, for what he would that he did not, but what he hated, that he did, *Rom. vii. 15*. Yet he declares, afterwards, he could do all things through Christ strengthening him. We may indeed enter upon this Enquiry with great Assurance, being encouraged thereto by a Cloud of Witnesses, which, tho' at its first Appearance it was little and like a Man's Hand, yet hastily overspread the Face of the whole Earth.

As the great Disorder of human Nature lies in the Overpoise of the Affections; in the Affections and Lusts of the Flesh; so is it plainly necessary in the Nature of things, that the Remedy should be immediately apply'd to that Part; to those Faculties where the Disease is principally lodged. Agreeably to this, we may observe that our Lord, *who knew what was in Man*, has directed his Instructions chiefly to this one Point.

The *Jewish* Dispensation was a strong Address to the Senses of Men, It is very wise and beautiful in this View. If it be considered with regard to any higher Design, it may be justly termed *weak and beggarly Elements*, or a servile Dispensation.

The Gospel Revelation is address'd chiefly to the Affections. This is the principal Scope of it; and if it be considered in this View, it is full of Wisdom and Efficacy: but if Men will
drop

drop the main Design of it, and substitute others in its Room, no Wonder if they misunderstand and lose the Benefit of the Whole. The Order of Nature is strictly observ'd in it. *Out of the Heart* proceed evil Thoughts, Adulteries, Fornications, &c. *Mat. xv. 19.* And again, *Ch. xiii. 35.* *A good Man out of the good Treasure of the Heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil Man out of the evil Treasure bringeth forth evil things.* Here the Reformation must begin; *This is the Covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those Days, saith the Lord, I will put my Laws into their Mind, and write them in their Hearts, in the fleshy Tables of their Hearts, soften'd and prepar'd for the Impression, and not in Tables of Stone:* In short, that Seed only which is sown in good Ground, that is, a Heart dress'd and cultivated beforehand, can grow up unto Perfection.

The Causes of

The Means provided in the Gospel to answer this end, will be found in the wisest and strictest manner adapted to it. There is not only a regular Process from first to last delineated in the Scriptures by way of Instruction, but there are also proper Helps and Assistances provided, which must be allow'd to be equally necessary, both internal and external.

In so long a Degeneracy in the Christian World, it is no wonder that these things have been overlooked, and that Christians in general have chosen rather to amuse themselves with trifling Speculations, or in vindicating such Positions as perhaps only support the Wealth and Grandeur of their respective Factions, rather than in those Instructions which lay the Ax to the Root of the Tree, and would eradicate the first Seeds of their favourite Vices and Corruptions. 'Tis no wonder that the continued Follies
and

and irregular Behaviour of Christians should be a Cause of Infidelity, tho' it is not a just one; for many can see what is wrong who have not Honesty or Sagacity enough to discover the Truth. 'Tis no wonder that Christianity, corruptly explain'd, and worse practis'd, should be disbeliev'd. Were the Gospel taught and exemplify'd in our Lives, as it was by the primitive Christians, there would not be at this time of day so many serious Unbelievers.

I must not at present enter into so large a Field of Discourse as the particular Means provided by our Lord for the regulating our Affections, for the disposing us to *receive with Meekness the ingrafted Word, and to know the Truth as it was in Jesus*; I shall only observe in general, that our Lord had his Fore-runner to prepare the way, and dispose the People for his Reception; that he chose his

The Causes of, &c.

Followers from amongst those who had been thus prepar'd for him by *John*; that he trained them up gradually, and try'd them in a way adapted to their growing Capacities; that he first gave them *Milk*, and then *Strong Meat*, and for a Time with-held from them such Duties as they were not able to bear. That the Apostles afterwards had their Children, their Young-men and Fathers, in Spiritual Improvement, and that for several Ages such like Classes were preserv'd in the Church, as long as it preserv'd its first Lustre. From these Hints we may conclude, that the Attainment of internal rectitude, the procuring a clean Heart and a right Spirit is a Business of greater Delicacy as well as Importance than is commonly apprehended. *Strive, therefore, to enter in at the strait Gate, for many I say unto you shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able, Luke xiii. 24.*

D I S-



DISCOURSE III.

Repentance the leading Principle of Christianity.

M A T. iii. 2.

Repent ye.

HAVING in a former Discourse shewn you at large, that *Love* is the *fulfilling of the Law* and the *end of the Commandment*; That the *principal and most peculiar Doctrine of Christianity*, and the most distinguishing Test or characteristick of our being the Disciples of Christ, is *that we love one another*

another as he loved us; and further that Love is the proper and most excellent Source of all Religion and Virtue; and that the same Acts, whether they be of Worship towards God or of Beneficence to our Neighbour, differ in their Value or Degrees of Acceptance, as they proceed more or less from this Principle of Love; That this Love which is emphatically press'd upon us by our Lord, is the true and real Perfection of our Nature, as we are social and immortal Beings; That whosoever possess'd of it, or any good Degree of it, does thereby become a Law unto himself, and does not stand in need of those little and low moral Instructions, which the World at present seems to be so fond of, but is ready upon all Occasions, from the Influence of his own Mind, to suffer long and to be kind, not to envy, vaunt himself or be puffed up, not to behave himself

*seemly, not to seek his own, or to be easily
provoked, or to think Evil; not to rejoice
in Iniquity but in the Truth, to bear all
things, believe all things, hope all things,
and endure all things; That this Love
supercedes all the ordinary Rules of
Morality, and breaks forth into an
exalted and heroic Virtue, taught on-
ly of God, and exemplified only by
Christ and his Disciples; and further,
that this Love of his is the only Prin-
ciple of clear and distinct Knowledge
in Matters of Religion and Virtue;
that whilst our Love is irregular it
will blind our Understandings, make
us rejoice in Iniquity and hate the
Truth, and those that press it upon
us; that it is also the only Principle
of Power by which we can be enabled
to discharge the Offices we are con-
vinced of; Having, I say, set before you
the principal Scope and Design of the
Christian Revelation which is to love
God and one another after the Ex-
ample*

Repentance the leading

ample of Christ's Love, the bare Representation whereof sets it above the Misinterpretations of its false Friends and the Aspersions of its avowed Enemies. I come now, according to former Intimation, to consider the Provision made, the Means furnished forth, by the Use of which we may acquire this Love which we are assured not only from the Word of God, but also from the Nature and Reason of things, as far as we are acquainted with them, is the utmost Perfection and Happiness of our Natures. The *End* must stand approv'd as most beneficial to Man, and of Consequence most worthy of God; and the *Means* I doubt not upon further Enquiry will carry in them the same Marks of divine Wisdom and Goodness.

The first Means prescrib'd is that of *Repentance*. It is term'd in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the *Foundation*, (vi. 1.) It stands foremost in the

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catalogue of Christian Principles, it is the first of the *Rudiments* or *Elements* of the *Oracles of God*. It is call'd *Milk for Babes*, that is, a Doctrine suited to our first setting out in the formation of our Lives, and adapted to the Weakness of our spiritual Childhood.

John the Baptist, who was sent out to prepare the Way of our Lord, and dispose the People in general for better Reception; who was the *Evangelist* or Herald of the *Messiah*, appointed to proclaim his Coming and the Approach of his Kingdom, *that Men through him might believe*; This *John*, I say, taught no other Doctrine but that of *Repentance*; Repentance is the *special Means* of *preparing the way of the Lord*; the *first Step* to be taken by all who would go on to perfection; the *Introduction* to the belief of that Gospel which was to be preach'd to all Nations, and which

who-

whosoever believed and was baptized should be saved, and whosoever believed not should be damned.

John did no mighty Work; but our Lord, who taught the same Doctrine of Repentance, confirm'd and enforced it by many Miracles. After this, our Lord call'd unto him the Twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two, and they went and preach'd, *that Men should repent*. We find (in the Sixth Chapter of *St. Mark*, Verse 7, 12, 13.) that he cast out Devils, and anointed with Oil many that were sick, and healed them. After this, he appointed out Seventy also, and sent them two and two before his Face, into every City and Place whither he himself would come. The Business of these Seventy was still the same, to *prepare his Way* by preaching *Repentance* and the Approach of the Kingdom; to them the Devils were subject (*Luke x. 1-17*) which

which, by the way, accounts for the reason (*John* iv. 12.) why *Jesus* baptized more Disciples than *John*, though *Jesus* himself baptized not, but his Disciples.

I would observe further in this Historical way, that 'tis more than probable, that many of the twelve Disciples whom our Lord chose, were taken out of *John's*, as having been prepared by him for their future Office in the way of Repentance. We are expressly told, that two of *John's* Disciples follow'd *Jesus*, one of whom was *Andrew*, *Simon Peter's* Brother (*John* i. 37-40.) and when one was to be put into the Place of *Judas*, this Qualification is recited, that he must be one who had companied with them, all the time the Lord *Jesus* went in and out amongst them, beginning from the baptism of *John*. It seems here to be imply'd, they all began with *John's* baptism, which our Lord himself also submitted to and declared it necessary

sary to his fulfilling all Righteousness
 Math. iii. 15.

From the Passages before cited abundantly appears that *Repentance* is the *first Means* prescrib'd, in order to arrive at that great End of all Revelation, *the Love of God and our Neighbour*; that it is the Foundation of all After-improvement; that where this Foundation is not laid, this first Step not taken, there can be no kind of Progress made in Virtue, but on the contrary, we must, like the unbelieving *Jews*, grow worse and worse, even by learning and never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.

Seeing then *Repentance* is a Duty of so great Importance, it behoves us to enquire into the Nature of it with the utmost Strictness and Attention.

'Tis true that all Foundations, Elements, and initiatory Instructions are of small Value when compar'd with the great things they lead to; there

accord

accordingly the same Disproportion
in the present Case as there is betwixt
learning the Rudiments of Science,
and making Advances in it; but ne-
vertheless seeing these Rudiments are
absolutely necessary to the Attainment
of these great things, the Beginning
ought to be attended to as much as
the End it self, a right setting out
being half the Work.

Let us then enquire into the Na-
ture of *Repentance*, and consider it as
the first Step to be taken, as the Pre-
paration of the Way of the Lord;
For if we do not keep Duties apart,
and treat them with Distinctness; if
we do not range them in their proper
Places, and according to their respec-
tive Subordinations, we shall never
know how to proceed, where we are
to begin or end, we *shall fight as those*
who beat the Air.

Tho' *Repentance* was far from being
a new or unheard of Doctrine amongst
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the *Jews*, yet we find when *John the Baptist* preach'd this Doctrine they did not understand the Meaning and Import of it; for we are inform'd that the People ask'd him, saying, What shall *We* do then? Now as this Question evidently implies the Ignorance of those that put it, so it as plainly gives us Reason to expect a plain Explanation of the Duty he taught, and they needed Instruction in; so that in the *Baptist's* Reply to this Question, we may reasonably hope to find a full and satisfactory Account of this previous and necessary Duty.

To the *People in general* who ask'd *What shall we do then?* he gives this Answer: *He that hath two Coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath Meat, let him do likewise.* To the *Publicans*, who coming to be baptized, ask'd the same Question, his Answer is, *Exact no more than that which is appointed you:* And to the

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Soldiers, who likewise demanded of him, saying, *And what shall we do?* He reply'd, *Do violence to no Man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your Wages,* Luke iii. 10-14.

We are told, that many other things in his Exhortation he preached unto the People, but those before recited are left upon Record, as containing in them a full and sufficient Account of this Doctrine.

Now we cannot but see from the meer mention of the *Baptist's* several Answers to the Questions put to him by these different Persons, that the whole Business of *Repentance* lies in this, that every sort of Men should renounce that Sin, should overcome that particular evil Habit which they know themselves to be enslav'd to, and their own Conscience cannot but upbraid them with. A very short, simple, and intelligible, and withal, a very full and complete Doctrine ! The several

Parties acquiesced in his Reply; no farther Questions arose, they were *baptized of him in Jordan confessing their Sins*. Had the Baptist in answer to these Querists talk'd to them in the Language of the School-men, and branch'd out his Doctrine of Repentance into *Confession, Attrition, Contrition*, and other such-like dark Subtilties, Questions and Answers would have arisen so thick, and numerous, that a Book of the Bulk of our whole New-Testament could hardly have contained them; and at last, nothing could have been learned from them, unless perhaps a Knack of unedifying Disputation. This seems to be the plain and simple Idea of the *Baptist's Repentance*; it is an Appeal to the *natural Conscience* of every Sinner, an Address to him to reform his *known Vices*, and further it goes not. As we proceed we shall see other Duties arise out of this, which have by many

many Writers been confounded with it, and with one another; tho' in the Scripture they are kept apart with the most exact Distinctness.

My next Business is to consider *this Repentance* as a *Foundation*, as the *Preparation of the Way of the Lord*, as the *first* thing to be done in order to our acquiring that *Love* of God and our Neighbour, which our Lord *exemplify'd* in his Behaviour, which is declared in the most express Terms to be the *end* of the Commandment, the great Design of all Revelation, and which I have before shewn to be the utmost *Perfection* and *Happiness* of human Nature.

Let us consider honestly with ourselves what would be fit for a Person to do first, who had taken upon him the Reformation of a wicked and perverse People, to change their Tempers and Manners, and to raise them to the highest and most heroick

Virtue. With what Doctrines, or Duties, or Discipline, should he begin? Is not *this Repentance* plainly, in the *Nature of things*, the *first Step* to be taken, the only right Setting-out? With what else can he begin? Suppose a Sinner to be exercis'd or employ'd in any other manner whatsoever, what will it avail, whilst his *predominant evil Habit* still governs, and he gives way to *the Sin that so easily besets him*? Is it possible, in this Case, there should be any Improvement, any Progress in Virtue? on the contrary, can there be any greater Progress in *Vice*, than to act in direct Opposition to our Conscience, or our Reason?

There cannot certainly be a readier Method to reclaim a Sinner, than to appeal to the Reason he has, whatever it be. If there are any Remains of Truth or Virtue, of real Conviction or right Consciousness, there must

must be so far Materials to work upon: Whilst a Teacher keeps close to these, his Scholar goes on with him hand in hand; he is so far antecedently prepar'd and dispos'd to attend to and concur with him; and if he can be prevail'd upon to attempt the Reformation of that Vice which either his Education, Conversation, Constitution, or Circumstances of Life have led him into, then will he be further dispos'd to hear and embrace other Duties and Offices; *ceasing to do evil, he will with great ease learn to do well.* But where the favourite Vice is still indulg'd, there is no possible Progress or Improvement to be made; all Instructions, Exercises, or Discipline whatsoever, are not only of no Effect in this Case, but are really hurtful and mischievous; as they divert the Attention of the Mind from its proper Business; as they engage it in a false Righteousness, and introduce

deceitful Hopes and Reliances, a Security much more desperate and irreclaimable than any degree of open and wilful Wickedness. Such was the State of the Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, who trusted to their being the Children of *Abraham*, and the Discharge of Ceremonial Injunctions; and by adhering to these things, by their substituting them in the Place of real Virtue, they shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against *themselves*, and even the *Publicans* and *Harlots* enter in before them, *Matth. xxi. 31.*

Now though this *Repentance* appears, I hope, after what has been said, a Doctrine of the utmost Plainness and Simplicity, and seems so obvious, that one would think the common Reason of Mankind could not possibly miss of it; yet we find it is in fact little taken notice of by the ancient Moralists and Philosophers.

phers. The Case of notorious and profligate Sinners, of Publicans and Harlots, and the proper Method of reclaiming them, are usually untouched and unobserv'd by these ancient Sages: For though Repentance is a natural Method, the great Inducements to it are peculiar to Revelation.





DISCOURSE IV.

Directions for Reading the Scriptures

JOHN V. 39.

*Search the Scriptures, for in them ye
think ye have eternal Life.*



THESE Words are address'd
to the *Jews*, and spoken
of the Scriptures of the
Old Testament; but must
be in Proportion more applicable
to us, as we have *Life* and *Immor-
tality*, in a more eminent man-
ner, brought to Light through the
Gospel.

I shall

I shall therefore, without any further Preface, inforce the Duty of Searching the Scriptures, especially those of the New Testament, from the Motive assign'd in my Text, *Because in them we think we have eternal Life.*

And *Secondly*, I shall lay down some Rules, which may be of use to us in this Business, and help to promote this End of our Searching them.

The Man who thinks at all, cannot restrain his Thoughts from launching forth into Futurity. Our State here is so short, so confus'd, and disproportion'd to our Capacities, that our Natural Reason suggests to us another, and our Natural Desires close with this Suggestion, and long after it. That Death puts a final Period to our Existence, is the most shocking Proposition; we recoil at the Thought,

Thought, and it seems impossible for us to reason ourselves into the Belief of it; if it be at all to be submitted to, it must be, by suspending our Reason, and indulging a brutish Stupidity. At the same time, when we look beyond this Life, we encounter nothing but an Abyſs of Darkneſs; whiſt we hope and believe, that, that Part of us, which in the Body thinks and deſires in ſo noble and extenſive a manner, will continue to think and deſire, when ſeparated from the Body, more extenſively and freely; yet the preſent Laws of our Being render it impoſſible for us to form any Conception of the Manner in which it will act, or be acted upon, in that State. All, at preſent, is perform'd by the Mediation of the Body, and in compliance with its Organization: What the State of the Soul will be, when 'tis uncloath'd, nothing but our

own Experience can inform us. We cannot but conclude, that the Inequalities of this Life will be rectify'd in the next; that the future Scene of Things will be so adjusted, that the Divine Wisdom, and Goodness, and Justice shall be apparent to all; but our Reason is unable to carry us on to any further Particulars.

Now if there are any Writings in the World that can confirm to us these our Forebodings of Eternity; that can insure these important Conjectures and Expectations beyond the Possibility of Doubt or Scruple; if there was a Person sent from Heaven to instruct Mankind in heavenly Things, the very Person who is appointed of God to be Judge of Quick and Dead, the Author and Giver of Life, who is himself to dispense the Rewards and Punishments of our future State; if this very Person has, in the most exprefs and determinate manner,

manner, declared to us the Conditions of our Salvation; if he has before-hand exhibited to us the very Articles of Examination, he will proceed by, in the great Day of Retribution; if he has represented the Circumstances of our future State, both of the Good and Wicked, under the strongest and most affecting Figures, the only Language we are capable of understanding in this Case; if he has approved himself to be this extraordinary Person, not only by his Words or Doctrine, but also by extraordinary Works, particularly his Resurrection; I say, if such Person has appeared in the World, in such manner, and given us such Instructions and Assurances, then the Obligations we are under to search those Writings, in which these Things are contained, are very apparent. These are the Things we are most highly concerned in, the Things in which the
World

World wanted most to be instructed,
and consequently the Things which
demand our best Diligence, as well
as Attention. The Account we have
in the *Acts of the Apostles*, xix. 19.
of a great Number of *Curious Books*
which were burnt before all Men,
by those who had received the Gos-
pel, is very natural, it was a proper
Testimony of the superior Value they
set on its marvellous Light and In-
struction.

We who are bred up, from our
infancy, in a Familiarity with the
Instructions of the Gospel, who im-
bibe them together with our ordi-
nary Notions, and so have no Op-
portunity of proving the Strength of
our Natural Reason, upon those Sub-
jects which we are before instructed
in from Revelation, we wanton in
the Light, we consider not its Glory,
neither can we easily conceive the
Advantages of it, having never known
its

its Want. Could we place ourselves under those Circumstances of Ignorance in which the *Jews* and *Heathens* were involved, before the Manifestation of the Gospel; could we feel their Doubts, and Fears, and Misgivings, before we were made acquainted with the good News and glad Tidings brought us by Christ, they must appear to us in quite another Light from what they now do to our Value and Esteem, our Thankfulness and Application must be greatly rais'd. But notwithstanding this, as things now are, *Eternal Life* is such a Motive, as all others must give place to, and retreat before our familiar use of the Words cannot destroy the Importance of the Idea. This present Life, with all its Glories, is a mere Blank in comparison of it; it appears to the first View the *one Thing needful*. And unless we are obstinately resolv'd to act at ran-

dom

dom, to embrace every present Good, and shut our Eyes against their Consequences, unless we love Darkness better than Light, and seek our Happiness in the Destruction of our best Powers, we must in the highest manner be influenced by this our highest Concern, *Eternal Life*; and search the Scriptures, the only Writings in which is manifested both the Certainty of it, and the proper Means of attaining it.

It is indeed a most amazing thing, that those Men who are apprized of it, and think they have it in the Scriptures, do not more apply themselves to search the Scriptures, and are not influenced by that Search to become quite another sort of Men, than they who have no such Instruction, and no such Motives; that there should be so little Difference in their Manners, whose Knowledge and Encouragements are so different. How

is that Instinct, by which we necessarily and incessantly gasp after Happiness, that Lust of Life and good Days determined, whilst every trifling present Good or Evil weighs more with us, than Eternal Happiness or Misery; these things would appear impossible in Speculation, were they not familiar to our Experience.

The *Jews*, to whom the Advice in my Text was immediately directed, were probably very conversant in their Scriptures; their chief Advantage above the Gentiles, was, that *unto them were committed the Oracles of God*; but this Advantage was entirely lost to those who improv'd them not to the Purposes of Eternal Life. *St. Paul* tells us, that there should come a Time in the Christian Dispensation, when Men will not endure sound Doctrine; and these not the open and avow'd Enemies, but Friends of Christianity; Men who shall

shall heap to themselves Teachers, having itching Ears. 'Tis well known that such Wickedness has been committed by the Assistance of Revelation, I mean by false Interpretations of it, and Pretences to its Divine Authority, as mere Reason must have blush'd at, and could have found no possible Means to have justify'd itself in: Men have thought they have done God good Service, when they were acting in direct Opposition to his plainest and most express Commands. 'Tis not long since, in this Nation, the most enormous Villanies were called *the Cause of God*, and by a Set of Men, who were such Admirers and Searchers of Scripture, that they spoke no other Language in their ordinary Conversation; and they were scarce reputed Christians, unless their very Names were Scriptural.

Directions for Reading

From these and many other Instances, which will every Day force themselves upon our Observation, we must conclude, That it is not barely enough to search the Scriptures; (many have done this, shall I say, to no Purpose? to the worst of Purposes;) but we should consider further of a proper Method of searching them in.

When we are commanded to search the Scriptures, we are suppos'd to be antecedently capable of understanding the Scriptures; of discerning the Reasonableness and Truth of the several Precepts and Duties in them enjoin'd. The Scriptures do constantly address themselves to us, as Creatures before-hand possess'd of these Capacities; therefore in searching them, as in other Writings, we must make use of our natural Understandings; we must inquire freely and impartially, *whether these things are so*; and not dream of New Lights, or
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rely on usurp'd Authorities, or cancel our Reason to make way for Faith. Many have set out without this Caution, how obvious soever it may be; and have, and do every Day fall in to those strange Extravagancies, which such wild Principles must naturally produce. The Scriptures undertake to enlighten our Understandings, and direct and quicken our Affections, but not to destroy either. We are *renewed in the Spirit of our Mind*, when we are rightly inform'd and employ'd.

As the great Motive for searching the Scriptures, is their containing in them *Eternal Life*; so a most obvious Rule arises from hence, *viz.* That we should always keep this great Motive in view, and make that the principal End of our Reading, which is God's chief End in Revealing.

The Observation of this Rule is absolutely necessary. Whoever reads

the Scriptures in this View, *Eternal Life* will meet him in every Thought. As they are calculated for this End, so they abound with Means to promote it. This Motive, once admitted, will grow upon us in every Search; and we shall soon find that Word, which is to many *Foolishness* and an *Offence*, to be *Wisdom* and *Power, Spirit* and *Life*.

But if we drop this View, no matter what other we substitute in its room, how shall we be inform'd or improv'd in that Particular to which we have no Eye? If we read the Scriptures, as Books of Entertainment, to waste a tedious Hour, or, which is more plausible, to criticise on the Language, Poetry or Oratory, to observe upon the Antiquities or History of them; or, which is more specious still, to assert their Divine Original and Authority; all these Ends we may answer, and become
notable

notable Proficients in any of these Particulars, and yet remain the same Men as to our *Moral Nature*, and be no more instructed in the Concerns of *Eternal Life*, than if we had been studying some profane Author with the like Purpose. We pass over the Words of *Eternal Life*, without any Impression from them; they suggest nothing at all to us, whilst the Intention of our Minds is directed another way. A various Reading, or critical Observation, engages some Men more than all the *Promises and Terrors of the Lord*. The Word of Christ, as well as his Person heretofore, is prest by Multitudes on every Side, but few are they who perceive Virtue to come out of it. We may eat of the Loaves, and admire the Miracles; we may find what we seek, but are not likely to find what we never search after.

Directions for Reading

Let every one therefore who takes the Word of God in his Hands, recollect within himself, with what View he is going to peruse it. The Design of the Author is *Eternal Life*; is this ours? otherwise those things which should have been for our Wealth, may be unto us an Occasion of Falling.

From what has been said, a Second Rule offers itself; and that is this; As we are directed in the Scriptures to search them, from the Motive of *Eternal Life* contain'd in them, without any mention of any other Writings whatsoever; so it is imply'd, That they are sufficient of themselves to answer this End. And there is a kind of tacit Prohibition against substituting of any other Writings, as absolutely necessary in the Discovery of *Eternal Life*. Should God have proposed an End to himself and us, in his Word, and not have provided suffi-

efficient Means, nor directed us how to come at Those that might be wanting, he had acted below the Wisdom of Men. Had not the Scriptures asserted, in the express manner they do, that they were able to make us *wise unto Salvation*, we must have concluded it, from their Silence as to any other Means prescrib'd.

The Papists do roundly deny the sufficiency of Revelation; the Traditions of the Church must be superadded; besides which they have many other Proposals, in which they cannot well agree amongst themselves, to supply their Defects. This I need only mention. But should any of us offer the most remote Supposition to mark in his Breast, that the Scriptures may not be sufficient for the Purposes of Eternal Life; where, under such Supposition, will he be able to fix the Sole of his Feet? If other Writings are necessary, who shall ascertain the

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Directions for Reading

the Number, or name the Author. We know no Person fit to sustain this Character. And if so, then nothing remains, but that we must, every one for ourselves, search not only the Scriptures, but also every Book which can make any Pretence to answer this End; for should we omit any, how shall we know but the supposed necessary ones may be in the Number of those omitted. This indeed would be a notable Task to set the World. But in what Particular, relating to Eternal Life, are the Scriptures defective, or from what Fountain can we draw a Proof of such Defect? If this cannot be done, we may well spare ourselves the pains of hunting in the Dark, after the unknown Supplies of unknown Defects. Every Person that thinks of Eternal Life must return to the Scriptures. 'Tis from our antecedent Knowledge of the Scriptures that we judge of the Good

oodness or Usefulness of any other Writings, with respect to *this End*; their Goodness arising wholly out of their Conformity to the Scriptures.

The Scriptures, considered as the Rule of Eternal Life, were sufficient long before they were enlarg'd to their present Bulk. What is said of *the Path of the Just*, may be well apply'd to those Writings which lead us to it; *They are as the shining Light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect Day*. If they were sufficient before the marvellous Light of the Gospel, they must since that be abundantly so. There is now more than *Line upon Line*, and *Precept upon precept*; the Land overflows with plenty; there is *Bread enough, and to spare*; it falls round about the Host; we find it at our Tent Doors, and every Man may gather according to his Eating.

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Directions for Reading

Those Persons who are incapable of reading the Scriptures in their Original Languages, by far the greater Part of Mankind, nevertheless know and feel their Sufficiency. The worst Translation will answer the Purpose of Eternal Life. He who at first found Instruments to deliver his Word by, and afterwards others to preserve it thro' so many Ages, has also found those who have reduc'd it into the Languages of all Nations. Divine Revelation ever has, and will be, a proper and effectual Means to convey Eternal Life to every one that is desirous of it.

I would not derogate from the learned and useful Labours of others useful in their Place; but am nevertheless bold to assert this Truth, That the Man, who interprets Scripture by itself, comparing *Spiritual things with Spiritual*, from the Motive of Eternal Life, is engag'd in a more wise and
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cellent Employment, than any other
whatsoever possibly can be where
his View is not; let it consist in the
in Jangling of Opinions, or the Strife
of Tongues, or any other Particular.

As this Second Rule arose out of
the First, so it suggests to us a Third,
in the same easy and natural manner.

Let Scripture be the best Interpreter of
Scripture, in the Concerns of Eternal
life, then should we in this way of
interpretation, have a most especial
regard to those Dispositions and Du-
ties which are signaliz'd in Scripture, as
the principal and fundamental Points,
upon which this Concern turns.

There are some initiatory Duties,
which, like the first Rudiments in a
science, are absolutely necessary in
themselves to the understanding and
practising the Precepts that follow.
Thus Repentance, which is nothing
else but a forsaking our known Sins,
is the first introductory Duty; what

is plainly necessary, in the Nature of things, to prepare the Way of the Lord. He who will not attempt this Difficulty, cannot possibly advance one Step in the Imitation of Jesus Christ. There are again some Declarations so strong and express, and so frequently repeated in the Scriptures, without any Limitation or Reserve; such as, *Love is the fulfilling of the Law; the End of the Commandment. By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another. Neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but Faith which worketh by Love. Pure and undefiled Religion before God and the Father is this, to visit the Fatherless and Widow in their Affliction, &c. What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do Justice, love Mercy, &c.* and the like. That these should be received as certain Axioms or Criteria, to which other Parts of Revelation, not so clear, should be brought and prov'd by their

their common Tests. The deceitful Heart of Man is always ready to lay hold of any Passage of Scripture that seems to favour its Corruptions; 'tis very artful and subtil in its Errors; it makes false Tests, and by means of these, interprets away the whole Design of Revelation. Innumerable are the Miscarriages which have proceeded from this Fountain; some of which, from Personal, have become National. Some have made *Persecution*, not *Love*, the Test of their Discipleship; *Antichristianism* the Characteristick of their *Christianity*. Others have rely'd upon the Personal Degrees of God; some upon Faith exclusive of Works; others on the Reverse. Had we any Eye to these Capital Articles, did we give them their proper Weight and Distinction, Revelation could not be liable to such monstrous Abuses; these, and a thousand other such-like Delusions, how strong

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strong soever, could not for a Moment maintain their Ground.

The Rules I have laid down for our common Instruction in Reading the Scriptures, are these: *First*, That we should make eternal Life our chief End, not only because it is our highest Concern, but because it is the great Design of all Revelation. *Secondly*, That in order to promote this End, we should seek our Instructions intirely in the Scriptures as abundantly sufficient to answer it. *Thirdly*, That whereas, the Scriptures lay an uncommon Stress upon some particular Virtues or Duties, we should not suffer any Interpretation of Scripture to pass upon us, which is not strictly reconcileable with these clear and express Assertions of Scripture.

From what has been said I would observe first, the heinous Sin of prohibiting the Scriptures, of withholding the Bread of Life from the Souls
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of Men. If the Scriptures are the only Writings which have in them an absolute Assurance of eternal Life, and they are with-held from us: This must be an Injury so much greater than all others, as the Souls of Men are more precious than their Bodies, eternal Life than the present.

Secondly, It may be doubted, whether ridiculing the Scriptures, be not a Sin more heinous in it self than the former, howsoever it may prove in its Consequences to others. To make a Jest of that awful Volume which was wrote by the Finger of God, which was designed for our highest Improvement and Happiness; what is this but to bid defiance to the Almighty, and throw off all Regard to Virtue and its Rewards? How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation; how indeed, if we ridicule it!

Thirdly, Misinterpreting Scripture, especially in the immediate Concerns

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of

of eternal Life, should not pass without its Censure. It is more nearly related to the two former Sins, than we may at first imagine. 'Tis a prohibiting as far as in us lies, the true Sense of Scripture, and furnishing the busy Mockers with the Materials they want; who, would they confine themselves to the Follies of Men, a Harvest plentiful enough, might do the World a considerable Service; but to make the Word of God, and the absurd Comments of Men one Subject of Ridicule, is the most unreasonable and audacious Injustice. In many things we may err innocently; a critical Mistake is of small Consequence; but Misinterpretations in things essential to eternal Life, are of too fatal a Tendency both to our selves and others, to admit of Extenuation. In this case, we take and give a Stone instead of Bread; instead of Fish, Scorpions. A Reason this, why every Teacher as

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well as Hearer of God's Word should keep his Foot, when he cometh into his House, lest he give the Sacrifice of Fools, who consider not that they do Evil.

I would observe, *Fourthly*, That in searching the Scriptures, from the Motive of eternal Life, and by the Rules laid down, we shall avoid many Difficulties and Perplexities, which the Man whose Eye is not single to this Point, will inevitably fall into. How clear soever the Scriptures may be in the Concerns of eternal Life, they are known to be very abstruse and difficult, deep and mysterious in other things. Our Vanity and Curiosity are apt to lead us into these Researches, in which we are often foil'd and offended. 'Tis to be feared, that many have been induced to disbelieve and reject all Revelation, upon Account of the Difficulties of some Parts of it. This present Time is a Time of uncommon Trial, in

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which

which the Grounds and Reasons of Christianity are attacked in the most artful and subtle manner, and in which the Advocates for it are not likely to agree amongst themselves. But to take occasion from hence, to reject the Faith of eternal Life, and neglect to use the proper Means of attaining it, (things which we cannot do without offending our natural Consciences, and defeating our highest Happiness) would not be less absurd and unreasonable, than if we should refuse to make use of the Fruits of the Earth for our Sustenance and Pleasure, because we cannot account for all their different Qualities. When our Lord entertained his Followers with that mysterious Discourse of eating his Flesh and drinking his Blood, we are told, that many of his Disciples could not bear the hard Saying, but departed from, and walked no more with him: Upon this, he asks the Twelve, *Will ye also*
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go away? They, probably understanding no more of the preceding Discourse than the others, answer by Peter, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal Life. Let this suffice us.*

The Scriptures compar'd with human Writings, may be thought less curious and instructive in many Particulars: Be it so. The *Greek* cannot find in them the Wisdom he seeks: But whoever considers our Lord, under the peculiar Character of the Author and Giver of Life, is immediately constrained to own, that he speaks as never Man spake. Herein is the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. We may know him well in other respects, as his Crucifiers heretofore did, and call his Blood upon our Heads, instead of incorporating it into our Hearts.

Some Persons may probably think, that in the Prosecution of this Subject,

ject, in recommending the Search of the Scriptures from this single Motive, their containing in them eternal Life, that I have not done Justice to other Inquiries, and that I may have less'n'd the Value of the several kinds of human Learning. This has been far from my Purpose. These Engagements may indeed by too eager a Pursuit draw us off from our highest Concern, and they may also be moderated and directed to assist it greatly. The Mind must be exercised variously as well as the Body, to improve its Strength and Vigour; The Employments of each are consistent with eternal Life, and may either advance or retard the Business of it, as they are subordinated to it or otherwise. There is a Liberty, as well as a Simplicity in the Gospel. *Brethren, we are called unto Liberty, only use not Liberty for an Occasion to the Flesh.* If we keep our supreme Concern in our View, it

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will bless and sanctify all our Labours, and be a sweet Companion and Guide to us in all our Inquiries: But if we suffer it to depart from us, we deprive our selves of our greatest Comfort, having nothing left to retreat to but Stupidity and Thoughtlessness.

I shall conclude this Discourse with this most excellent Collect of our Liturgy.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience and Comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast, the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.





DISCOURSE V.

The Gospel Notion of eternal Life
inquired into and explained.

JOHN vi. 68.

*Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord,
to whom shall we go? Thou hast the
Words of eternal Life.*



THE Occasion of these Words
was this: Our Lord had been
entertaining his Followers
with a very strange and my-
sterious Discourse, which was so shock-
ing and offensive to many of them
in its outward and obvious Meaning,
that they call'd it a hard Saying, ask-
ing

ing amongst themselves, who could bear it? Nay, so hard was it to them, that we are told, that from that time many of his Disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

The Discourse at which they were so highly disgusted, and provoked to a final Desertion of him, was concerning eating and drinking his Flesh, and Blood; which he assured them was so absolutely necessary, that without it they could have no Life in them. This, when understood in its Literal Meaning, must be very surprising to the *Jews*, who were under positive and repeated Commands from God, not to eat or drink so much as the Blood of any Beast. *Levit. vii. 26.* it is said, *Ye shall eat no manner of Blood, whether it be of Fowl, or of Beast, in any of your Dwellings: Whatsoever Soul it be that eateth any Blood, even that Soul shall be cut off from his People.* The *Jews* being under such strict

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strict Commands against eating any sort of Blood, could not but wonder that the drinking a Man's Blood should be made the necessary Means of Eternal Life, when they had the undoubted Word of God for it, that *whatsoever Soul should eat any Blood, should be cut off from his People.*

This was the Discourse which gave occasion to many of his Disciples to depart from him, and walk no more with him; and 'twas upon their Departure that our Lord ask'd the Twelve, whether *they also* would go away; to which *Simon Peter* answered, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life.*

Now in these Words it is plainly express'd, That the Words of Christ are the Words of Eternal Life; or, That Eternal Life is plainly made known in his Words.

Secondly,

Secondly, That merely upon that Account, without any Regard to any kind of Difficulties, we ought to adhere to Christ, with the Twelve; and not forsake him, as many in the time of his Appearance in the Flesh did.

First then, It is plainly express'd in my Text, That the Words of Christ are the Words of Eternal Life; or, That Eternal Life is plainly made known in his Words.

Now the Eternal Life which is manifested in the Words of Christ, is not the eternal Duration of the Soul simply consider'd. For of this, both *Jews* and *Gentiles* were generally well enough satisfy'd before. When our Lord bids the *Jews* search the Scriptures, he tells them, that *in them they thought they had eternal Life*. So that our Lord does plainly acknowledge, that they had some Knowledge and
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Expectation of Eternal Life from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. I know it is a common Notion, that the *Jews* had no certain Knowledge of the Immortality of the Soul; but this is plainly contrary to the express Words of our Lord, and is rather discountenanced than confirmed by those Words of the Apostle, on which it seems to be built; *Who brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.* For these Words, in the Original, do not imply a bringing a thing to light which was in such a State of Darkness before, as to be altogether unknown and unthought of; but rather a brightening and clearing something which was not well understood, or rightly pursued. So that the Immortality of the Soul is not peculiar to the Words of Christ; 'tis what indeed he speaks but little of, taking it rather for granted, than endeavouring to prove it; it needing no Proof, being

ing before-hand generally confess'd
and believ'd.

But nevertheless, there are many
things relating to the Immortality of
the Soul, both as to its Happiness,
and the Means of obtaining it, which
Christ has discover'd to us, and which
we can find only in his Words.

By *Eternal Life* is indeed meant,
not so much an Eternal Duration, as
the Happiness of that State; Eternity,
without Happiness, being not worthy
of the Name of Life.

So that the Eternal Life made
known in the Words of Christ, is no
other than Eternal Happiness: Im-
mortality is the common Lot of all
Men, both Good and Bad; but Eter-
nal Life is the Privilege but of a few;
there are not many that shall enter in-
to it, it being the Consequence and
Reward of one peculiar sort of Beha-
viour.

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Now if we consider the Words of our Lord, in which mention is made of this Eternal Life, we shall, without much Difficulty, discover the Nature of it.

We are told then, in expresse Terms that this is Life Eternal, to *know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, Joh. xvii. 3. Now to know God, and Jesus Christ, is to be like them in our Temper and Disposition of Mind, and in our outward Actions and Behaviour. For he that *says he knoweth him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Lyar, and the Truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his Word, in him verily is the Love of God perfected; hereby we know that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk as he walked*, 1 Joh. ii. 4, 5, 6. This Eternal Life, which arises from our Conformity to God, and his Son Jesus Christ, is begun here in the Body,

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and is often spoken of as a thing to be enjoy'd here in this World: *He that hath the Son, hath Life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not Life;* but it is chiefly applied to our State after Death, because then we shall enter upon a more complete Enjoyment of the Happiness of it; whereas here it is mix'd and allay'd with many Trials and Temptations, Calamities and Miseries. *But there shall be no Sorrow, nor any more Pain, but all Tears shall be wiped away from our Eyes, and all the Distresses of this Life come utterly to an end for evermore.*

We are told, *Joh. v. 26.* That as the Father hath Life in himself, so he hath given to the Son to have Life in himself; and *Joh. xvii. 2.* that he hath given the Son Power over all Flesh, that he should give Eternal Life to as many as he hath given him. In these Words we are informed, that Eternal Life is the Gift of the Son; and the Gift

Gift will bear a great Resemblance to those Perfections which the Giver himself enjoys. We shall be *fast* on'd like his glorious Body; we shall see him as he is; our Conversation will be in Heaven with him; and when he appears in Glory, we shall be like him. Our Fellowship is to be with him, and with the Father. Such then, in some measure, as the Life of God himself is, will this their Eternal Life be; such their Happiness, such their Dispositions and Desires, such their Gratifications and Enjoyments. As no sort of Evil, Pain, or Uneasiness, can invade or approach the Divine Nature, so neither will any thing of this Kind be capable of disquieting their Peace, or coming nigh their Dwellings. As God is completely happy in himself, overflowing with Mercy and Benevolence, undisturb'd by any Cares or Fears, any Passions or Inquietudes; so the Righteous, as the

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Wise Man says, *is satisfy'd with himself*; he enjoys a perpetual Feast within his own Breast; a kind of Self-Sufficiency, like that of God's; a Calm and Composure which no Storms or Tempests from without can break in upon or disorder. Again, in relation to Things without; As God has perfect Complacency in his Works of Creation and Providence, in his making and governing the World; so the Righteous, in their Eternal Life, shall have the same Pleasure arising to them from hence with God; they will be taken up with Wonder and holy Astonishment in surveying the Effects of his Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, which will be no longer mysterious and unintelligible to them; they will have a clear Insight into those Depths of Providence which are in our present State unsearchable, and at last our finding out. Those dark Dispensations which now puzzle us,

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which, through their seeming Inequality, are apt to raise Murmuring and Repinings in us, will then yield us Matter of Praise and Adoration ; to search into them will be an Entertainment full of Delight and Transport. We shall not only have the same kind of Pleasure in the Works of God in general, as he has : But as he has a Pleasure in the Prosperity of his Servants, and is recreated with their Happiness, so we shall participate in the Felicity of each other : we shall communicate our Knowledge and dispense our Joy, and unbolesse our Delights, and feast one another with every thing that is entertaining to ourselves ; insomuch that each shall enjoy the Happiness of all ; all striving together, in holy Love and friendly Emulation, to increase the Happiness, and raise the Enjoyments of the Family of Heaven. This, and infinitely more than this, more than Eyes

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hath seen, or Ear heard, or Tongue
can express, or Heart conceive, is
contain'd and imply'd, in this single
Expression, That our Eternal Life
shall be in the Likeness of the Son
and of the Father. Were we to
write a thousand Volumes upon this
Subject, had we the Tongue of Men
and Angels, were the Bless'd above
to come down to us, and give us an
Account of their Eternal Life in the
most sublime Descriptions, what great-
er thing could they say of it, than
that it is *like the Eternal Life of*
God. For in this short Expression
is included all possible Perfection and
Happiness. When we are told this,
our Imaginations cannot conceive,
nor our Desires reach forth, after any
thing beyond it.

But the Words of Christ do not
only exhibit the Nature of our Eter-
nal Life, but the Means of attaining
it. It would indeed be but of small

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Service to us, to paint forth these Joys in the most lively Description, were we still left at a Loss how to arrive at them. Did we know whither our Lord went and knew not the Way, how should we follow him? But in this Sense also his Words are the Words of eternal Life, not only pointing out the End, but directing us to the ready Means, by the use of which we shall infallibly obtain it. And these are the being made like unto God, or which is the same thing, the being conform'd to the Likeness of Christ, who is the express Image of his Person, in our Desires and Dispositions: To become holy as he is holy, pure as he is pure, and merciful as he is merciful. The Words of Christ are continually exciting us to labour after this Change and Renewal of our Nature, to walk in this newness of Life, and to mortify all those Appetites and Inclinations, which are contrary to the di-

divine Nature, and irreconcilable with the Life of God. For the Foundation and Capacity of Happiness is lodg'd in our Appétites and Dispositions; such as our Desires are, such must our Happiness be; Happiness being nothing else but the Gratification of our Desires, and acting suitably to our Inclinations. If our Dispositions differ from those of God, it is impossible in Nature our Life should be like his; for it is our Dispositions that are the Directors of our Life; to find Objects agreeable to them is our utmost Happiness. We know very well, that according to the different Cast and Temperament of our Minds, Men seek after different Gratifications, and place their Happiness in different Pursuits; hence proceeds the Difference of their Life; what is Pleasure to one, is either indifferent or perhaps painful to another; so that it is absolutely impossible in Nature,

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that our Life or Happiness should be the same with another's, unless our intimate Desires, Appetites, and Inclinations are really the same, these directing us to the same Objects, and giving our Souls the same Relish and Delight in them; without these we are carried away to things of another Kind, yielding another Sort of Pleasure, and producing a Life of a contrary Nature. Hence we see the Reasonableness of those Commands of our Lord's, of procuring the same Mind in us which he had, of becoming new Creatures, and many others to the same purpose; nay, we see the absolute Necessity of obeying them, and submitting to them; I mean, of using them as Means to obtain the End proposed. He that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of his, neither is he in his Nature capable of the Happiness of Christ. Let his Profession and outward Appearance be what it will. And he that

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has the Spirit of Christ, that is, has invested himself with the same Temper of Mind, the same Dispositions and Desires, he has the Power of an endless Life. For this it self is Life eternal to know thee the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. This Knowledge of God and of Christ is nothing else but a Conformity to their Natures: For if we say, that we have Fellowship with him, and walk in Darkness, we lye, and do not say the Truth. To be thus spiritually minded is Life eternal, beginning in Time, and never to have End. He that hath the Son hath Life, and he that hath not the Son hath not Life. An eternal Duration he has, but this is so far from Life, that throughout the Scriptures it is termed Death. For whilst they who are conformed to the Likeness of God, find both within and without themselves, the same Happiness which God enjoys; they who

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have no other Dispositions and Desires but what they contracted here in earthly Enjoyments, they being removed from those Enjoyments, and still retaining the same Desires after them, their Life is Death, being of Dispositions contrary to God, they must be alienated from the Life of God. Their Eternity is spent in desiring, and despairing ever to procure what they desire: The deferring of Hope maketh the Heart sick, what then must the total Absence of it do? The little Disappointments we meet with here, where nevertheless we have many things still remaining to gratify our Appetites, pierce our Hearts through with many Sorrows, what then must an universal, eternal Disappointment do, which leaves us no one scantling of Enjoyment, not the least degree of any kind of Gratification for any one Appetite? Where nothing can remain but eternal unavail-

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ing Anguish, and the endless fretting of Desires against each other. To have every Appetite and Desire of our Nature always sending forth vain Cravings, to have every Power and Capacity of our Souls hungering and thirsting with the utmost Intensity and Earnestness, and not one Drop of Water to cool the Tongue thus heated and inflamed, must be a State of the utmost Misery and Torment we are capable of conceiving.

Thus is eternal Life made known in the Words of Christ, both the Nature of it, and the ready and direct Means of attaining it; and this in such manner as was altogether new and unknown to the World before his Time. For tho' the Immortality of the Soul was generally believed, yet Mankind were entirely ignorant of the State of its Immortality. They that had the most sublime Thoughts of it, tho' they talked of being received

ceived up into the Mansions of the Gods, and feasting themselves with them, yet had very gross Ideas of God, and of his Happiness and Life. They knew nothing of the eternal Life of the Gospel, nor the rational Means of attaining it.

The second thing proposed, was to shew you, that we ought with the Twelve to adhere to Christ and his Words, in which this eternal Life is reveal'd, and not desert him as many of his Followers did, in the time of his Appearance in the Flesh, upon account of any Difficulties whatsoever relating to other things.

As Eternity is plainly the highest Concern of every Creature that is capable of it; as the things of this Life are as unequal to those of the next under every Consideration of them, as the Duration of the one is to the other, so finding this our important State of Eternity set forth so clearly in the
Words

Words of Christ, with the rational Means of attaining it; (our State of Eternity, which the wisest Men of this World knew so little, and gave us such very imperfect Rules to obtain it, and whose Precepts had no other than their own Authority to recommend them) I say, seeing we have this eternal State clearly reveal'd to us in the Words of Christ, and in no other Words whatsoever attested to by the Authority of God himself; here is the highest Reason, the strongest Motive we are capable in our Natures of being influenced by, to adhere to Christ and his Words. To whom indeed should we go? Was there any thing of greater Importance than eternal Happiness, we should act wisely in furnishing our selves with the best Instructions we could in relation to this our supreme Concern: But there being nothing of this Nature, nothing that can stand in the lowest

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lowest degree of Competition with it, the *Preparation* for our Eternity we call our *Religion*; we stile it the *One thing necessary*; which *One* thing is to over-rule us in all other things whatsoever, which must be brought into a Subordination to it. Whom then should we follow? whose Words should we have the highest regard to but *his*, who gives us the best and most excellent Instructions in that thing which is of so supreme a Consequence and Concern to us?

We are told, that in the time of his Appearance in the Flesh, he was often attended by great Multitudes of Followers, some from one Motive, and some from another. Some accompanied him out of Curiosity, some for the Loaves, some had an Expectation of his establishing a temporal Kingdom, and of being chief Ministers of State therein, many regarded him as an Enemy to the Civil

vil and Ecclesiastical Establishment, to the Temple and *Cæsar*, and they attended him with a Design to betray him. They were indeed but a little Flock who followed him under the special Character of the *Lord* and *Giver of Life*: who *knew* his Voice, and *attended* to his Doctrine, and *conformed* themselves to his Example, with relation to this End, as he was the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Neither is the Case much different now with us. Christ has still his Multitudes, he is throng'd and press'd on every side, but there is too much Reason to fear, (there is so much Reason, that we cannot but conclude) that they who do now regard his Words as the Words of eternal Life, bear the same Proportion to those who do not, as the Twelve did to the Land of *Judea*, *Jerusalem*, and the Country about *Jordan*. How many thousands are there now that find the same Difficulties

now

now to acknowledge him to be the Son of God as the *Pharisees* did heretofore. The Generality of his Followers regard his Kingdom as a Kingdom of this World, they look upon his Rules of Life as a System of Politicks, they establish various Societies and Constitutions of Government upon the Plan of his Doctrine, and the whole Drift and Design of their Behaviour is calculated and laid out to advance themselves, and sit at his right Hand and his left, in this his supposed Kingdom. The Scriptures are wrested into a thousand wild inconsistent and contradictory Schemes; whereas the Words of Christ are barely the Words of eternal Life, they are not design'd to inform us in any other Particular, and he that is not with him in this one Point, is against him. 'Tis in this Particular he teaches as never Man taught; in other Matters there's no such Form, Beauty nor Comeliness

ness in him, he passes over other things as not worthy his Notice, nor our Care and Concern. 'Tis *eternal Life* he sets forth and recommends to us, and instructs us in; *eternal Life*! the most cursory Contemplation of which, has enough in it to obliterate every other Care, and enhance the whole Solitude of our Souls. The Things of this Life, are the Things which must pass away, and are consequently such Things as we cannot reasonably take Thought for, seeing there are Things at the very Door which must abide for ever. Were any of us assured that we should be removed from a mean and indigent, and painful, to a great and happy State of Life; had we the Promise of such a Favour from some great Man that we could rely upon, that he would confer it when he saw it most convenient for us; surely we should overlook our present State: Our Expectations would be raised,
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our Souls would be wrapt up in, and our whole Behaviour would be one continued act of Preparation for this happy Advancement. How is it then we are so little influenced by the Promises of an unchangeable God, by the bright Prospect of Eternity held forth to us? Had Eternity once made its Impressions upon our Souls, and turned our Faces Heavenward, and did we apply ourselves to the Words of Christ, simply as the Words of eternal Life, our Delight would be in them, and they would be dearer to us than thousands of Gold and Silver; neither would it be in our Power to depart from him. To whom should we go to be better instructed in this Particular, or what Particular of Instruction could we prefer before this? But if being regardless of Life eternal, we read them with other Views, no wonder we are offended at him, no wonder they appear foolish things to us,

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no wonder we find not those things in them which they were never design'd to instruct us in.

Blessed are they who have Eyes to see, and Ears to hear, and Hearts to understand, that is, who have Dispositions to receive and improve the Words of Eternal Life: They, tho', when measured by the Wisdom of this World are thought Fools and Madmen, yet being wise unto Salvation, shall be approved and applauded in the Presence of God and all his angels, and receive a Crown of Glory which shall never fade, and be admitted to a Happiness that will know neither End nor Interruption.





DISCOURSE VI.

The Universality of the future
Judgment.

2 COR. V. 10.

For we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.



It is very evident, that the great Business of all Lawgivers has been to encourage the Love and Practice of Virtue, and to discourage and punish Vice, by all the best Means within

within their Power: And this arose from an obvious Discernment of the natural Excellence of the one, of its Tendency to promote the Happiness of Man, whether we consider him apart by himself, or as a Member of Society. For if Virtue and Vice had no other Foundation than the mere Pleasure and Authority of Legislators, the Laws made concerning them would have been as various, as in all other indifferent Matters: There could have been no such universal Agreement about their Nature, among all polite and learned Nations; but they would have changed in every Climate, in every different Form of Government that prescribed them.

But tho' all Legislators have agreed in this Point, it is at the same time equally evident, that none of them have been able to assign to the different Branches and Degrees of Virtue, their proper and just Reward; or to

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the different Complications of Vice, their deserved Punishment. This has not been, nor indeed is capable of being effected; and for these Reasons; because many Acts, which appear to us to be Virtuous, or Vicious, may be otherwise; and because many Acts of Virtue and Vice never fall under our Notice or Cognizance at all. The Credit which Virtue maintains in the World, makes many a fair Hypocrite; the Punishments of Vice drive Sinners into the Dark, where many Wickednesses are committed, such as no Eye can discover, and therefore no Power can redress.

This has been the State of the World from the Beginning to this Day; and must be so, as long as the Interests and Allotments of Virtue and Vice are left under Human Inspection, and to the Judgment of Men only. This Case has greatly perplex'd and offended many wise and good

good Men, who have at last been unable to discover any Remedy for it. Hard it is, that the most excellent of Mankind should meet with the worst Fate; and that the most Wicked and Mischievous should not only escape, but prosper.

To say that Virtue is its own Reward; that it is inseparably attended with Peace and Happiness within; and that Vice carries its own Punishment with it, (were it always true) does by no means reach the Difficulty. For suppose Virtue to be always happy within, why must it not be outwardly happy also? Is it upon that Account reasonable that it should be impoverish'd, imprison'd, or disgrac'd? If it endures Afflictions better, does it therefore deserve them more? Or are the Loss of Convenience, Liberty, Reputation, such Discouragements, as Virtue only is insensible of?

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And suppose that Vice must necessarily be attended with a secret Anguish and Sting within (which however is not always the Case) must it therefore receive no other Punishment? Or is it fit therefore that it should be enriched, honour'd and advanc'd? What is then to be done? Here is plainly a great Defect, something wanting, which no Human Power or Wisdom can provide for, or supply.

Let us attend to the Words of the Text, and we shall see this great Difficulty removed, and Light arise from the Darkness. *We must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* This is the most important Truth that ever was made known to the World: It clearly vindicates the Divine Justice in the seemingly unequal Distribution of the

the Things of this Life : It satisfies all the anxious Reasonings of Mankind : It exhibits to Virtue a full Reward for all its Discouragements and Sufferings: and assures us there will be a Time when Wickedness shall be brought to Justice: and if any thing can be a Check to Wickedness, the *Terrors of the Lord* must be.

Tho' this Truth was never made clear and certain, till the Publication of the Gospel, yet it was not wholly unknown to the World before. Many of the Superstitions, both of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, are evidently founded on the Supposition of a future State. They had their *Elysian Fields* for Heroes, and Men of virtuous Character; and other infernal Abodes for the Wicked, with a variety of Punishments, very fabulous indeed, but nevertheless very significative. In this View it is worth our observing, that the Expression made use of by *St. Paul*,

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that *Jefus* *Chrift* brought *Life* and *Immortality* to *Light* through the *Gofpel*, does not imply the *Discovery* of a thing absolutely unknown, or unthought of before; but the brightening or clearing up a Matter that was before obscure or doubtful. The *Epicureans* indeed were led, by their whole *System* of *Philofophy*, to deny a future *Judgment*; they could not admit a *Providence* in any *Particular* or *Degree*: So that we need not wonder that, when *St. Paul* preached at *Athens*, this *Sect* efpecially, when they heard of the *Refurrection* of the *Dead*, *fhould mock*. Neither need we, on the other hand, be surpriz'd that *Dionyfius* the *Areopagite* fhould believe, and *certain others* with him. They were probably of other *Sects*, whole *Philofophy* prepar'd them to attend fuch a *Doctrine*, as much as the *Epicurean's* difqualify'd them for it. *Cicero*, upon more enlarged *Principles*,
fpeaks

speaks of a future State with great Assurance and Consolation : And among the *Jews*, it is certain that the *Pharisees* were thoroughly persuaded of the Resurrection of the Dead.

The Subject is of so great and universal Importance, that it has been treated of by innumerable learned and good Men ; nay, there are scarce any Discourses upon any particular Branch of Religion or Virtue, in which this Subject has not a large Share, as being in its Nature the great Support and principal Motive of both, in all their Parts : So that there is no Person, who has any Belief of, or Regard to a future State, but may be easily furnish'd with very useful Books upon this Subject.

I shall therefore, in my present Discourse, confine myself to the following Observations.

The first Particular, which offers itself, is the *Universality of the Persons*
to

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to be judged --- all Men, all the Generations of Mankind in one Assembly: *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.* Now, without playing the Orator upon the Largeness and Solemnity of this Appearance, I shall observe, that there seems to be a Necessity in the Reason and Nature of things, that all the Tribes and Families of the Earth should appear together upon this Occasion. It is reasonable to think, that proper Rewards and Punishments could not be so well dispens'd, if Men were to be try'd apart, at different Times, and in separate Bodies. They could not be so well satisfy'd of the Equity of their own Case. The Divine Justice could not be so open and apparent unto all. For God *will be justified in his Sayings, and will overcome when he is judged* * : The

* Rom. iii. 4.

Lord will come with ten thousands of his Saints, to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly Deeds, which they have ungodly committed; and of all their hard Speeches, which ungodly Sinners have spoken against him*: So that the Mouth of all Wickedness shall be stopped, and every one be self-condemned in his own Breast. Now were Men to be tried in small Parties, how could this End be answer'd? how could they know that the same Equity and impartial Distribution was extended unto all? But where every one is a Witness to the whole Proceeding, this must in course follow.

And there seems to be another Ground or Reason for this Universal Appearance. For we cannot conceive the Virtues and Vices of a single

* Jude 15.

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Person can appear in their full Extent, or be brought to a fair and equal Account, without bringing in very great Multitudes, if not the whole Race of Mankind, as Parties concern'd; without going forward and backward from the Beginning to the End of Time. We are indeed apt to think, that the Habits and Actions of Men are merely their own, and do not commonly inquire into the Causes, and Combinations of Causes, which concurred to the Production of those Habits. But a very little Consideration will open to us a spacious and most extensive Field, to the Boundaries of which even Thought itself cannot reach: Education, Example, the Notions and Fashions of the Age, are all instrumental in forming our Manners. *All* these Causes were introduced to Us, by our Forefathers, and to them by theirs, and so on backwards from the Beginning; and will

will be continued down to the latest Posterity in the same manner: So that you see the very Reason and Nature of the Thing itself demands this universal Appearance. Where all are so linked together, from first to last, in influencing each other in their Notions and Practice of Religion and Virtue, it seems impossible that a fair and equal Account, in regard to these Particulars, can be made up, and that the Equity of it can be manifest to All, without the joint Appearance of *All*.

The same Reasons will serve to illustrate another Particular, often mentioned in the Scriptures, and that is the *Appearance of all the holy Angels* upon this Occasion. For, as they are *all ministring Spirits*, attending on the Affairs of Salvation, that is, in Matters of Virtue and Religion, they are evidently Parties concern'd, and their Presence, even in that Respect, may be thought necessary.

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Besides this *Universality of the Persons*, there is another Particular of the highest Importance, and that is the *Universality of the Discoveries* there to be made. And without this, all that is before observed, would be absolutely useless. *God will judge the Secrets of all Men by Jesus Christ: He will bring to Light the hidden things of Darknes, and will make manifest the Counsels of the Hearts: and then shall every Man have Praise of God**. Were the outward Actions only to come under Cognizance, as in human Tribunals, Religion and Irreligion, Virtue and Vice would be very partially represented, judged, and rewarded, and Men could not have their due Praise from God. For Religion and Virtue, and their Contraries, are seated in the Heart, in the Will and Intention, which we have innumerable Ways to disguise and palliate: And even when they are

* 1 Cor. iv. 5.

most openly declared by outward Actions, they are declared very imperfectly. 'Tis true, *we* can judge of them only by their Fruits; and this Sort of Judgment, as defective as it always is, is sufficient for the Purposes of this Life, which do not require that we should know exactly the Measures of each other's Virtue and Vice. But where Men are to be rewarded or punished according to the Rules of the strictest Equity, this would by no means do. Outward Actions do, almost in every Instance, represent too much, or too little; more or less than was intended: They cannot bring to view the State of the Mind, the several Motives and Inducements by which it was actuated, nor the Struggles it might go thro' within it self, which are the very Circumstances that enhance the Account both of Virtue and Vice. These are things which other Persons can never know by outward

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ward Appearance; nay, we ourselves are not perfect Judges of them. I cannot but observe here the great Propriety of that Passage in St. Paul: *With me (says he) it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of Man's Judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self: For I know nothing by my self, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord**. And that of St. John, *If our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things.* --- But to return. The Value of Virtue and Vice is not to be estimated by any outward Circumstances. How mean an Appearance did the Widow's Mite make in the Treasury? Without doubt it was a contemptible, perhaps a ridiculous Offering, yet it was the greatest Gift there. The highest Degrees of Virtue and Vice can seldom shew themselves in any outward Acts *at all*; they

* 1 Cor. iv. 4.

exceed the Ability of the Persons in whom they reside. Neither Goodness, nor Malice can execute half their Purposes: The Act stops short, and can go no further, but leaves the Mind to intend and execute the rest. Now was there not to be an unveiling of the most retired Inclinations and Intentions of the Soul, were not the most silent Thoughts of the Heart, the very Blushes of the Mind to be made known, there could be no strict Equity in assigning the Rewards of Virtue and Vice: The most distinguishing Circumstances of each would escape Notice. But where the Intention is open'd to the very Center, where we are laid bare to the first Principles of Inclination, and all Progresses both within and without are display'd to View, all the secret Springs, all the Combinations and Involutions of Circumstances unravell'd, there the bare our own Will has in every thing

must appear, and then our own Concurrence, that is, our Virtue or Vice may be separated from all extraneous Causes, may be seen simple and naked, and treated with the most exact Justice.

How this will be effected is absolutely beyond our present Comprehension. I shall only observe, that the Word of God manifested in the Flesh was quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart. Neither is there any Creature, that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the Eyes of him, with whom we have to do*. If the Word of God was thus powerful and piercing to Men in the Body, we may easily imagine that it will have a greater Influence

* Heb. iv. 12, 13.

in a spiritual Estate, and be exerted with more Power, when we shall be as the Angels, and capable of seeing, even as we are seen.

Again, it is observable, that both the Happiness of the Just, and Torments of the Wicked are said to proceed from the Presence of the Lord. Let us attend to St. Paul's Description of this Presence. *The Lord Jesus (says he) shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.* Now this glorious Appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ cloathed in Light and Splendor, this powerful Glory may as naturally make manifest the Counsels of the Hearts, as the Light of the Sun does material Objects:

• 2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9

The Power of Glory may possibly consist in this, and so may be conceived to be equally a Source of Happiness to good Men, and of Torment to the Wicked, making Discoveries advantageous to the one, and very grievous to the other. The Lovers of Light and Darkness in this Life must be the same in the next, and will have their suitable Places of Abode assigned to them.

I have now only two Observations to make upon what has been said, the first to confirm our Faith of this important Doctrine; the second to influence our Practice.

Upon our first and most remote Enquiry into this Doctrine it appears, that upon a Supposition that there is no future State of Rewards and Punishments, the Interests of Virtue and Vice are almost intirely unprovided for: And hence it will follow, that there is no Wisdom, Goodness, or Justice

Justice presiding over the whole. The next Step is, that every Man may do what is right in his own Eyes, and provide for his own Pleasure, just as he thinks fit. This is the Scheme on one side, and what is embraced now a-days by most Libertines and Villains: Here Pleasure is the only End, and they that serve it best, (be the Means what they will, be they the Misery, Ruin and Destruction of Millions) they must be the wisest Men. When *Men love Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil*, it may be natural enough for such Men among the other Errors of Life, to admit these Absurdities.

On the other hand, Men, whose Ideas of Wisdom, Goodness and Justice are as clear and positive, as those of black and white; who are satisfied that there is a real and essential Difference between Virtue and Vice; These Men know that the Author of Wisdom,

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Goodness and Justice in others must have them in himself; and must deal with those, to whom he has imparted them, wisely, goodly and justly; or else he has imparted them in vain, and has them himself in vain; which is in short, not to impart them, or have them at all. For a vain Wisdom, Goodness and Justice are none at all. If then the Maker of Mankind is a Wise, Good, and Just Being, which is a Point that needs no proving; and if his Wisdom, Goodness and Justice do not fully appear in the Distributions of this Life, but there are frequent Appearances to the contrary, what is the Consequence? What is reasonably to be expected? Nothing can more obviously, or more certainly be inferr'd, than a future State, and a future Reckoning. These were expected by Mankind before there was any Revelation of them. The Hopes of good, and the Fears of bad

bad Men suggested them; and the Reasonings of all, that would reason, confirm'd these Apprehensions. So that when they are revealed, one would think there could be no Objection. The Evidence I have here insisted upon, is what arises from the Nature and Necessity of things. The particular Circumstances of a Judgment to come, which Revelation has given us, as far as we have now enquired into them, appear not only reasonable, but absolutely necessary. Now where a thing was so agreeable to the natural Notions and Expectations of Mankind, before it was reveal'd, and after its Revelation appears in all its Parts and Branches so strictly reasonable and necessary; They who reject it, must not be directed by Reason, but by Darkness, and a resolute Love of and Adherence to it. The Perplexities on *their* Side are endless, all is Darkness; there is no other Resort, or

Shelter. On the other side the Light shines, all Difficulties are removed, seeming Contrarieties reconcil'd, and Wisdom, Goodness and Justice established for ever.

The other Application I have to make is such as may influence our Practice. The natural and internal Evidences of a future Judgment revealed, before we come to consider its external and adventitious Evidences, are such, as no impartial Reasoner can resist. Now the Matter of it is of so supreme an Importance, that not to admit it, as our first Principle or Motive of Action, must be Madness. Was it barely doubtful, every wise Man would choose the safest Side: But, as It is evident, to disregard it, is to disregard our highest possible Concern. *We must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ,* none shall be exempt. The Secrets of all Hearts shall be disclosed, no Artifice

vice, no Subtily will avail, no Power
can rescue us, no Covering hide us,
Our Confederates together with our
own Hearts will witness against us.
Our present Glories will be our Shame.
There is no need of many Words up-
on this Occasion, the plain Impor-
tance of the Thing it self is sufficient
to make us very careful in our Con-
duct, which is to come before so aw-
ful a Tribunal. But at last what is
this Conduct? There is nothing re-
quired of us, if attended to, but what
our Reason must approve as most ex-
cellent, and our Affections embrace
as most conducive to our Happiness,
even in this Life. The whole is, the
Love of God, and of our Neighbour,
to do unto others, as we would they
should do unto us; which we cannot
contradict in our Manners, without
offending our Consciences, and gene-
rally counter-acting our own Interest.
And the Pleasures, we propose to our
selves

selves in the Neglect and Breach of these Duties, are so insignificant and unworthy, that they will bear no Examination with regard to their ordinary Consequences in this Life, much less to their future and eternal Consequences. *For what is a Man profited if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?*

♥ *Mat. xvi. 26.*





DISCOURSE VII.

The Reasonableness and Efficacy of
Prayer.

PHIL. iv. 6.

*Be careful for nothing, but in every
thing by Prayer and Supplication with
Thanksgiving, let your Requests be
made known unto God.*



PRAYER and Thanksgiving
to God, have been the prin-
cipal Branches of all Reli-
gions in all Ages and Na-
tions of the World. How much so-
ever Mankind have differ'd in their
Conceptions of the Divine Being, and
how

The Reasonableness and

how various soever they have been in their Methods of worshipping him, all have agreed to ascribe to him their Blessings and Enjoyments, in Thanksgiving; and to have recourse to him for the Supply of their Wants, and the Removal of their Calamities, in Prayer.

The Christian Revelation carries these Duties to the greatest Height, it continually injoining them, and inforces them with the greatest Earnestness.

Our Lord commands his Disciples to pray in secret, and assures them, that they shall be rewarded openly; that what things soever they should desire when they prayed, if they believed that they should receive them, they should have them; He spake a Parable also to them to this end, that *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*

His Apostles, after him, are continually pressing these Duties. *To pray without*

without ceasing. I will that Men pray every where, lifting up holy Hands without wrath or doubting. Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all Perseverance. And in the Words of my Text: Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God. We see how frequently and earnestly these Duties are press'd upon us, and what great Encouragement, what powerful Motives are proposed to us, to induce us to be constant in the Discharge of them.

These Duties therefore must deserve our most strict Inquiry. I shall take occasion to shew you the Nature of them, the Reasons on which they are founded, which will be so many Motives to excite us to the Discharge of them.

First then, I must observe to you, that in those Passages of Scripture, where

where such like Promises as these are made to Prayer; if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven. And again, Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do; if ye abide in me, and my Words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you; Is any sick among you, let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the Name of the Lord, and the Prayer of Faith shall save the Sick, and the Lord shall raise him up. The effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much. In all these and the like Instances, ordinary Prayer is not to be understood, but such as was that of Elias, who prayed earnestly, that it might not rain, and it rained not on the Earth for the space of three Years and six Months, and he prayed again, and the Heaven gave rain, and

and the Earth brought forth her Fruit. I say it is very evident that these Promises are made only to extraordinary or inspired Prayer. A Case far from being uncommon in the first Ages. St. Paul says expressely, that the Spirit helped their Infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit it self maketh Intercession for us with Groanings which cannot be uttered: And he that searcheth the Hearts knoweth what is the Mind of the Spirit, because he maketh Intercession for the Saints, according to the Will of God. He tells us again, that they had not received the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God, that they might know the things that are freely given to them of God, which things also they spake, not in the Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. In his Discourse concerning the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, and in his laying down Rules
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for the Exercise of them; it appears that they sometimes prayed in an unknown Tongue, and that whilst their Spirit prayed, their Understanding was unfruitful; so that this inspired Prayer was suggested, or immediately dictated by the Spirit of God, and of Consequence must be entirely agreeable to his Will, and so we need not wonder that such Promises should be annexed to it, that it should be heard and answered. There is nothing in *this* difficult or abstruse, nothing but what is easy and reasonable. For supposing that any Person could assuredly know that his Prayer was dictated to him, by the Spirit of God, he could not then but know that the Contents of it, the particular Matter of his Petition, must be granted; such Prayer as this may well be called the Prayer of Faith.

We must be careful to distinguish this kind of Prayer and every thing spoken of it in the Scriptures, from
that

that which is ordinary, uninspired, and the mere Product of the human Mind. Innumerable have been the Mistakes which have arisen from applying things, which are in their Nature peculiar to the Inspired State of the Church, to the ordinary and uninspired. How well composed soever our Prayers may be, and how sincere soever we are in offering them up, if we know them to be only the Work of our own or other Mens Imagination, or if we cannot be assured that they are the Dictates of the Divine Spirit, or that he does in our own Breasts intercede with God for us, it would be the greatest Folly and Presumption imaginable to place any such Faith or Trust in them, as Men might reasonably do, where they had such Assurance and Conviction.

But tho' ordinary Prayer can have no such Efficacy, nor lay in any Claim to the Promises made to that which

is extraordinary; yet it is not without its proper Fruits and Effects.

Could we suppose, that the Creator of the World, had from the Beginning disposed Causes and Effects in a certain necessary and invariable Order, so that all Events from first to last must come out in one manner only; that all things were predetermined, and conducted by the strictest Necessity in the mere material World; (which is such a Constitution, as is of all that are conceivable, the most discouraging to Prayer; for it might be ask'd in this Case, to what purpose should we pray, when Events must be the same with, or without our praying;) I say, even under such a Supposition as this, Prayer would have this Efficacy; That it would greatly influence our *moral* Behaviour, which we know is not, cannot be constrained. The Desire of maintaining an inward Purity of Mind and an outward Rectitude

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tude of Manners, the bringing the supreme Being frequently into our view, a constant walking in his awful Presence, has in it a natural Power to purify the Mind and reform our Manners; we cannot but know and feel their Efficacy; and that when we neglect to recollect such Thoughts and excite such Desires, that our Minds grow dark and impure, and our Manners irregular; and that we are unhappy within our selves, and injurious to others. Moral Righteousness or Unrighteousness are things as plainly to be perceived and known by us, as bodily Pain or Pleasure; and as we cannot well err in our Petitions, as long as they are confined to *moral* Cases (for no Man ever desired God to make him more vicious, or to assist him in Sin) so I say, was there no divine Concurrence, yet Prayer would by its mere natural Efficacy in moral things be of great Use to us. The

Desire of Virtue frequently excited and repeated must be a natural Cause of our Advance in Virtue. So that tho' such a Constitution of things, as we have for the present supposed, would render Prayer for temporal Blessings absurd, because all things without us would be carried on by a rigid Necessity; yet allowing our internal Nature to be what it is and we know it to be, even ordinary Prayer must have a great moral Efficacy and Power.

But *Secondly*, If we suppose the material World is under a moral Government and Disposition; that the Laws of Nature are not so predetermined, but that things may be varied and applied differently according to the several Merits and Exigency of moral Agents; and that the great and wise Author of the whole is thus in Mercy and Justice continually modeling and directing it; then *Prayer* must

of course be of still greater Efficacy and Virtue. And that this is really the Constitution of things is most certain. We know our own *Freedom* of Action, as well as we know that we *are*. We experience certain *Powers* over the material World, tho' they are limited ones. Tho' we cannot *alter* the general Laws of Nature, yet we can *apply* them variously: We can combine and separate them at our Pleasure, which would be impossible, were natural Causes directed by the before mentioned Necessity. We have great Power over the Creatures beneath us, and over one another; and in Particulars of the utmost Importance we can give Pleasure and Pain, and even preserve or destroy their Being. To say that we are not *free* in these Instances, and that these Powers are under the common necessary Direction, is to take away all Difference betwixt Liberty and Necessity; for we

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are as free as we can be, we act from an inward Principle of Choice, which is under no Constraint that we are sensible of, and we can have no Notion of a greater Freedom than this. And as we are conscious of these Powers within our selves, and as we know that there is a Series of Beings *beneath* us, of different Powers and Perfections, carried down to the lowest Degree of Life and Sense, which have such Powers over one another, and over which we have such Powers; so it is a Truth universally acknowledged, that there is a like Series or Order of Beings *upwards* increasing in Power and Perfection, and that they have proportionable Powers over each other and us; so that free Action and moral Government is continued up without Interruption to the supreme Being himself; and the material System is so far from being under a necessary Adjustment in all its

its Parts and Motions, so that they must all proceed on in one pre-ordained Course, that the Whole is subject to the Free Action of innumerable Beings of different Orders and Perfections. 'Tis a large and a proper Scene for them all to exercise their several Degrees of Power, and to shew their Art and Industry, their Goodness and Beneficence to each other. In such a Constitution of things as this, which was it not revealed to us in Scripture by the Author of it, yet must upon the first Proposal to us gain our immediate Assent, as being most agreeable to our own Experience, to the Analogy of Nature, and most worthy of its immense Author ; I say, in such a Constitution as this, the Efficacy of Prayer must apparently be very great. For if it becomes *reasonable* Creatures to act *reasonably* ; and if there is a *Relation* betwixt all Rational Beings, from the Fountain

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of all Wisdom through the several Orders down to Mankind, there must be Exercises of Power, and Communications of Goodness, arising from those Relations; from our right or wrong Behaviour in them. And then, if Prayer and Thanksgiving are reasonable Duties; if it becomes dependent Beings to acknowledge their Dependance; those that are helpless to ask Assistance; those that sin, to repent and be sorry for their Transgressions; those that receive Blessings and Favours, and have nothing that is strictly their own, to acknowledge the Favours they receive, and behave gratefully to their Benefactor; I say, if these are reasonable Duties, (and our Reason constrains us to own that they are) then they who *discharge* them will be treated as acting *reasonably*; with *Favour* and *Kindness*; and they who *neglect* these Duties, must be dealt with as acting *unreasonably*;
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Things will be *dispensed* to them, and the *Course* of their Affairs *ordered* in such manner, as will be most apt to *bring* them to *act reasonably*; and if *kind* Dispensations will not do, *severe* ones will be applied. As the *moral* Good of Mankind is their *chief* Good, both in this Life, and that which is to come; so all *other* Goods must be dispens'd in a *Subordination*, and with a *View* to this. Moral Perfection we may safely pray for, and for moral Assistances, because we can scarce err in any Particular of this Sort; and cannot fail of having our Petitions granted. But as for *temporal* Blessings and *worldly* Prosperity, Health, Long-life, Riches, and the like; these we must ask with Resignation and Submission, because we know not how they will affect us in our moral Capacity, whether they will prove good or evil to us; these we must leave to him, who knows
our

The Reasonableness and

our Necessities before we ask, and our Ignorance in asking; and who has promis'd, that if, in the first Place, we seek the Kingdom of Heaven, and its Righteousness, all other things shall be added unto us.

In Temporal things, it is enough that we use our honest Endeavours, and pray to God in general for a Blessing upon them; and accept the Issue, be it what it will, as a *Blessing*, as what is most promotive of our moral Perfection: But in moral Cases, besides our Endeavours, we must add special and particular Prayer; for by This, and this only, as a Law fix'd in the Natures of Spirits, we dispose our Souls for the Reception of the particular Assistance we want, and derive into our Nature a Grace, not otherwise to be obtain'd.

As we know then, 'as well from the Reason of Things, as the Revelation

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tion of God, that there are innumerable Orders of reasonable or moral Agents, of different degrees of Power and Perfection, and who, as well as we, must have a proper Scene of Action, a suitable Latitude to exercise their Powers in; as there must be a certain Connexion or Dependance betwixt all the Links of this Chain; and as Moral Perfection must be the same in all, and can only vary in degree; and as Prayer and Thanksgiving are evidently reasonable or moral Duties, they must be means of uniting us to the Source of all Power, and engaging it in favour of us. And if so, what greater Encouragement can we have to *pray without ceasing*, to be *careful for nothing* of a temporal Nature, that is, not to be *anxious or solicitous*; but in every thing, by *Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, to make known our Requests unto God*, the only independent Being,
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the Author of all Power and Perfection, who irradiates the whole Series of rational Beings, and to whom all must be accountable for the Use of their several Powers; seeing by the Discharge of these, and other Duties which are inseparably connected together, we procure all Favour and engage all Power on our Sides. The Material World is indeed incapable of hearing Prayer, or observing our Actions; but it is enough that *that Being* hears us, to whom *all* is *subject*, and of consequence by whom the whole Extent of Nature, either mediately or immediately, is continually modelled and applied, in a rational and moral way. Our moral Behaviour, therefore, is the Cause of all our Happiness or Misery; all depends upon it; and as Prayer and Thanksgiving are such eminent Parts of Morality, and as it were the Sources of all Virtue, without the
constant

constant Practice of which, all the other Branches of it must decay, and come to nothing; all may be said to depend on these Duties.

Walk before me (says God to *Abraham*) *and be perfect*; this is evidently the Way to Perfection and Happiness; this is the way to overcome our Sins and our Miseries, to *be careful for nothing*, to live with as little Sollicitude as the Circumstances of this evil World will admit. They who know they *please God*, must be free from innumerable Cares and Fears, and real Evils, which they who are *without God in the World* must be continually expos'd to. They who impute all to *Chance* or *Fate*, and will not allow a *Moral Government of the World*, converse in a very dark and comfortless Scene of Things. Where there is no Interposition of Power, of Wisdom, and Justice, in Human Affairs, there can be no Prayer, no
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Thanksgiving, no Hope, no chearful Prospect of any kind, no Reason, no Duty; this is inverting and unhinging the whole Order of Things. But as we have the Light, and the Truth before us, all this Gloom must be dissipated, and the Darknes disappear. Let us therefore preserve in our Minds a continual Sense of the Divine Being and Government, and this will be attended with never-ceasing Prayer and Thankfulness; it will keep with us in all our Employments, and be a sure Guide to us in all Difficulties; it will be a Comfort to us under Disappointments, and Strength in Temptation: And let us always remember, That Prayer consists in the *real Desire of the Soul*, whether it be express'd in Words, or no, and that Words without This are no Prayer, whatsoever the Sound or Signification of them may be.



DISCOURSE VIII.

The mutual Relation and Benefit of
Hope and Patience.

ROM. xii. 12.

Rejoicing in Hope, patient in Tribulation.

SAINTE Paul's Manner is, after he has dispatch'd the principal Business and Design of his Epistle in a close way of Reasoning, to remind his Correspondents in the Conclusion of his Letter, of the chief Duties of their Calling, of those especially which bore any near Relation to the Circumstances they

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they were in, in a more loose and unconnected way. The Words of my Text are taken from that Part of the Epistle which is not strictly argumentative, and so do not demand of us any Inquiry into their Scope or Connexion, but may be consider'd apart by themselves, as containing in them a very useful and important Instruction. I shall therefore without any further Preface inquire,

First, Into the Nature of *Hope* and *Patience*, and seeing they are joined together by the Apostle into the Relation they may bear to each other.

Secondly, Into the particular *Hope* we are here commanded to rejoice in.

And *Thirdly*, I shall exhort you to hold fast and cherish this *Hope*.

First then, I shall inquire into the Nature of *Hope* and *Patience*.

Hope

Hope is a chearful Expectation of some future or distant Good; and *Patience* a calm and composed enduring a present Evil. By observing the Course of things, the Revolutions of Events, we get acquainted with natural and moral Powers, and by recollecting what is past, we can reason on by Analogy to what is future; and lay out a probable Scene in Futurity either agreeable or disagreeable to us. 'Tis in this manner we furnish our selves with the Materials of Hope and Fear, which are so many happy GuesSES or Conjectures of what may be to come, from our Experience of past Events. Was Memory a bare Recollection of things past, yielding us no Rule or Reason whereby to judge of things to come, it would be a very barren and useleſs Faculty. Did Darkneſs cloſe in upon every preſent Moment, our Lives would differ but little from thoſe of Inſects; we ſhould go on

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without Choice, Counsel or Design. But by recollecting what is past, we judge of what may be to come; we lay out Schemes of our future Conduct, and *hope* and *fear*, upon some tolerable degrees of Probability. As to *Patience*, had we not a Power of composing our selves under a present Calamity, we must necessarily be borne down and crush'd by the first Evil that should befall us; 'tis *Patience* that gives us the Power of considering the Circumstances of our Misfortunes, that points out the Remedy, and shews us the End of our Suffering, and kindles a Hope of better things. When we lose *Patience*, we forego the Use of all our best Powers, we deliver ourselves up to the Evil that invades us, we cannot judge rightly of any thing present or to come, but lose the Possession of our Souls. St. Paul tells us that *Tribulation worketh Patience*, and *Patience Experience*, and *Experience* Hope.

Hope. This is a plain and natural Account of the Process of the Mind from one of these to the other. In another Place he joins Patience and Hope in yet a nearer Alliance, where he speaks of the Patience of Hope; these Twin Powers do evidently spring from the same Fountain, and must increase or decline together. *What is Patience without Hope?* And again, *What room for Hope without Patience?*

Our Lives seem to be almost wholly taken up in these two Exercises. The Goods of this World are so mix'd and alloy'd, and disproportion'd to our Appetites, that when we get them into our Possession, and sit down to the Enjoyment of them, we find our selves cheated by our too warm Expectations; we must rise again and set Hope to work, we must beat our hearts for something future, finding always that we rejoice more in Hope than we do in Fruition. Again, the

Evils and Calamities of Life are so many and great, that the Exercise of Patience is continually necessary; and if our Pleasures call in Hope to their Aid, how much more do our Miseries? so that almost all our Time is spent in Hope and Patience, our Enjoyments giving us but very few if any Avocations.

Hope is perhaps the most active and indefatigable of all our Powers; tho' it brings home little to our Enjoyment but what proves a Delusion, yet it is not to be discouraged by all its Disappointments, but will immediately enter upon some new Pursuit. Hope will interpose in the most gloomy Thoughts, and get above our most reasonable Fears; we think it worth our while to suspend all our other Powers to attend to this fond Deluder, and hope even against Hope. We know not how to divest our selves of this assiduous Companion; the Mo
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ment it leaves us we are in danger of falling into the most comfortless Situation of all others, *Despair*.

Now seeing Hope is of such considerable Use to us, in diverting the manifold Evils of this Life, and supplying the Emptiness of its few Pleasures, by starting continually new Objects of Delight, and promising still better things, and all this, when it makes not good those Promises, when it leads on thro' a Train of Disappointments, when (as *Plato* terms it) 'tis only the Dream of a waking Man; how much greater must its Efficacy be, how much more blessed its Influence, could it be furnished with Objects whose Attainment was certain, and whose Enjoyment compleat?

Now such is the Hope set before us in the Gospel; such is the Hope we are here commanded to rejoice in. The Characters of it in the Scriptures are exceeding strong and sublime. *We*

are called, says the Apostle, *in one Hope*, in opposition to that confused Variety of Hopes which distract the Children of this World; this is a Hope which *maketh not ashamed*, whereas all other Hopes end in Disappointment and Confusion. This Hope is call'd an *Anchor of the Soul*, *sure and stedfast*: Every other Hope is doubtful and timorous; the best laid Scheme for the future Goods of this Life, may be defeated by many Accidents which we our selves can foresee, besides which, there are many others, that may break in upon us which we cannot so much as guess at; but this is a Hope attended with Confidence and Assurance, because we see thro' the Means to the End of it; the whole Business of it lies betwixt God and our selves, *God who cannot lye*, and *our selves*, who may be true to our selves, if we will: This is a Hope full of Immortality, full of Glory, in Comparison

parison of which, all other Hopes are narrow and short-sighted, mean and abject.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ, as *St. Paul* says, is our *Hope*; To have our Bodies fashioned like unto his glorious Body, to partake with him in the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, to live, to reign together with him to all Eternity, this is what the Gospel recommends to Hope; This is expressly declared to be one great Design of Revelation; for, says the Apostle, *whatsoever things were written afore-time, were written for our Learning, that we thro' Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have Hope.* And again, the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, comparing the Law and the Gospel together, says, *the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better Hope did.* You see here, that the better Hope brought in by the Gospel is the Thing which gives it its Preference to the Law, the

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Thing in which its greater Perfection
consists.

It remains now, that I exhort you
to hold fast and cherish this Hope.

Hope, as was before observed, is
the most resolute and indefatigable of
all our Powers, it will be employed
some Way or other, and it solicits
the Imagination so forcibly, that we
cannot, if we would, be ignorant of
the Particulars it is exercis'd upon;
we cannot but know, whether we have
hitherto been engaged only by the
short and broken Prospects of this
Life, whether we have trod round and
round this narrow Circle of Vanity
and Disappointment; or whether we
have extended our Views and en-
larged our Prospect to that important
Scene of things, which must open
to us in our next Stage of Exist-
ence, and as the Apostle expresses
it, laid hold on the *Hope* set before
us in the Gospel. These, I say, are
things

things we cannot, if we would, be ignorant of.

But further, as we are form'd for Immortality and Glory, and placed here in this World only to prepare our selves for a better, so our own internal Nature and the Circumstances of all things without us, are continually suggesting to us that better State, and we cannot without some very unnatural Industry suppress our Longing after Immortality. The things in which our Happiness is deeply concerned are not hard to be discovered; 'tis hard indeed not to discover them; tho' they are invisible they are clearly seen, tho' they are future, they will be present with us; and notwithstanding all our Care to exclude them, they will force their Entrance, and impress our Understandings; so that we may not only readily answer our selves the first Question, *viz.* Whether we have admitted the Hope of the Gospel or not,

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not, but we must further know, that if we have not admitted it, we have taken pains to exclude it.

I shall address the first Part of my Exhortation to those who may be under these Circumstances.

Experience shews us that Men may become industrious to silence their Reason and extinguish Reflection, and that, in Particulars by themselves acknowledged to be of the utmost Importance; insomuch that they shall be enraged at others for pressing these ungrateful Truths upon them; nay, and be dissatisfied with *themselves*, when they are by their own Minds, in a kind of involuntary way, suggested to them. How unnatural must the State of such Men be in their highest Enjoyments! Their best Powers must be disallowed, all serious Reflection suspended, and the Scene of their Happiness be laid in Darkness and Thoughtlessness: In such

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manner must the House of such Men be swept and garnished, swept of all that is worthy and perfective of our Natures, and garnished with Darknes and the Deeds of it, a *fashionable* and *elegant* Furniture!

Be it allowed that bodily Pleasures may for a Season amuse such Men, that especially during a State of Health and Plenty they may support some kind and degree of Happiness; yet we all know, that Health and Plenty are uncertain things; Diseases will invade us, and our Pleasures themselves will produce Pain; we know that they have in themselves a Tendency to destroy the very Health and Plenty which are their Source and Foundation; and at last Death must approach us, and place us upon the Verge of both Worlds, and in spite of us, exhibit to us the closing of the present Scene, and the opening of that which will be Eternal, and force us to

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to look back upon our departing Pleasures, and forward upon our approaching Suffering, with the utmost Anguish and Confusion.

Further, be it allowed that we do not at present certainly know the State of departed Souls, what their Condition will be, either before or after they are re-united to a Body of a very different Nature from what we now inhabit. Allowing this, I say, yet it is very clear to us (indeed nothing is more so) that He who came down from Heaven to teach Men heavenly Things, that is, the very State of departed Souls, He who is appointed to be the Judge of Quick and Dead, has actually represented their Condition under Characters of the most extreme Opposition. *These* are said to be carried by Angels into *Abraham's Bosom*, to enter into the Joy of their Lord, to go into Life eternal, to inherit the Kingdom prepared for them before

before the Foundation of the World, to be crown'd with Glory, Honour, and Immortality; The *other* to be cast into Hell, into eternal Torments with the Devil and his Angels, where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched. Whilst *these* praise God and say, *Glory and Honour, and Praise be unto our God for ever and ever*; the *other* call out upon the Rocks to fall on them and hide them from the Face of him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb. Our own Reason will confirm to us the Truth of these Revelations, there must be a time when Virtue shall be rewarded and Vice punished; and the strong Light the Scriptures represent these things in, has in it the greatest moral Efficacy possible, and must move the Hopes and Fears of every Man, that is not very industrious to shut his Eyes and harden his Heart against it.

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The monstrous Folly of those Men who make it their Business to exclude all Hope and Fear of their future Condition, must abundantly appear; that they are treasuring up Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and take more Pains to be eternally miserable, than others do to be eternally happy.

There are another sort of Men, who run into the contrary Extreme; who do indeed frequently and with great Satisfaction entertain themselves with the Hopes of future Happiness, but at the same time they use not the Means which are absolutely necessary to obtain it; and so their Hope is merely Presumption, and their final Condition no better than *theirs* who exclude all Care and Concern about it. Our Lord represents the Wicked as hoping and vindicating themselves, even after their final Sentence is past upon them; they say unto him, *When saw we thee an hungred or a-thirst, or naked,*

naked, or sick, or in Prison, and did not minister unto thee? Nothing could be more proper than this Representation of the Behaviour of wicked Men at the last, to rouse us up to Diligence, and a strict Examination into the Grounds and Reasons of our Hope; Many, you see, will persevere in a false Confidence, even to the last. Let every one therefore that hopes, fear also that he is not of this Number.

Now abideth Faith, Hope and Charity. 'Tis the Business of Faith to produce Hope, and of Hope to beget in us Charity; The Hope which is not preceded by a rational and well-grounded Faith, and follow'd by Charity, has no good Cause, and can produce no good Effect. *He that hath this Hope in him, says the Apostle, purifieth himself even as he is pure.* The Hope that does not purify our Natures, and reform our Manners, is the
Hope

Hope of the Hypocrite, which shall fail; it is idle and trifling, and as much the Work of a fond, a dreaming Imagination, as any worldly Hope can. But the Hope which has Faith for its Cause, and Charity for its Effect, is an Anchor of the Soul, sure and steadfast. We need not wonder that we are said even to be saved by this Hope; for by it we lay hold of the precious Promises of God, by it we extract Motive and Efficacy from them, and gain a Power from things future and invisible, superior to the immediate impressions of things present and sensible. This Hope is as it were, the active Spy, which we send forth from the Wilderness of this World to the heavenly *Canaan*, which brings us back the good Report of the Country, and gives us a Taste of those Fruits with which it overflows. It carries us thro' the Difficulties and Dangers of the howling Wil-

Wilderness and emboldens the Armies of *Israel* under the greatest Terrors. Without this Hope we become the Sport of every Temptation: What sufficient Balance have we against the Pleasures and Evils of this Life? what Encouragement to persevere in Virtue persecuted and afflicted? But where this Hope is at hand, it surmounts all Difficulties, and overcomes the World. Whosoever therefore finds this Hope thus efficacious upon all Occasions, that can apply it with Readiness and Dexterity when Temptations arise, that Man has laid his Foundation upon a Rock which can never be shaken; but if we do not experience these Effects from it, we are in the Number of Hypocrites; we fight without our Armour, and have not as yet put on this Helmet of Salvation. Enough must have been said to those, whose Hope is laid up in Heaven, to induce them to examine strictly and seriously

The Relation and Benefit of
into the Grounds and Reasons of
their Hope.

There are a third Sort of Men yet behind, those I mean who have upon good grounds laid hold on the Hope set before them in the Gospel. How happy are these Men, under all, even the worst of Circumstances? They have a Joy set before them, which enables them to endure the Cross and despise the Shame. The more unworthy things they suffer, the greater still is their Assurance of Reward hereafter; those very things which are most grievous to other Men, nay, even Death it self, the great King of Terrors, is a welcome Messenger, a Messenger of Joy and Happiness to these. These Men can sooner admit any Contradiction or Absurdity whatsoever, than once suppose it possible that God should fail them who seek him diligently in Faith and good Works, and place their whole Trust and Confidence in him.

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These Men however ought to be put in mind of the great Difficulty, if they should fall away, of their being renewed again unto Repentance.

Upon the whole, you see the great use of Hope to us in this Life, that we must be always hoping for something or other; You see how excellently the Gospel has provided for our Hope; you see the Efficacy of this Hope, to carry us through the Pleasures and Miseries of this World; you see the infallible Certainty of its Reward where it is real and well-grounded; you see the great Danger of admitting false Hopes, and building on deceitful Foundations; You see the great Importance of these things both to our present and future Happiness: Let us therefore for the future cherish continually and improve this Hope. And may the God

of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in believing, that you may abound in Hope through the Power of the Holy Ghost.



DIS-



DISCOURSE IX.

The Blessedness of bearing our own
Burdens.

JAMES V. II.

*Behold! we count them happy which
endure.*

WHEN we hear any thing
advanced as a Truth, or
pressed upon us as a Duty,
which seems repugnant to
our Reason, we have a natural Right
to make our Inquiries and propose our
Difficulties ---- The Proud and Petu-
lant would, at first hearing, condemn
the thing for a Falshood, and evil-

N 3 intreat

The Blessedness of bearing

intreat the Maintainer of it, without any Trial or Examination.----- But every reasonable Man, every one who has been used to Doubting and Searching after Truth, will be so far from being displeased at a Proposition which seems contrary to his way of thinking, so far from being provok'd at the Person who asserts it, that he will embrace the Occasion, and enter into the Debate with Pleasure and Satisfaction, If the Matter, at last, proves a Falshood, he has an Opportunity of convincing his Brother; if a Truth, of informing himself. They only, who take up their Opinions without Reasoning, are Enemies to it. They defend themselves by Power, and Passion, and Clamour, Methods, which no Man that has Reason at hand, can make use of.

The Words of St. *James* which I just now read to you, are plainly contrary to the common Sentiments,
Expe-

Experience and Practice of Mankind. Behold! says he, with an especial Emphasis, *we count them happy which endure*, which are in Misery; this looks like an inverting, a destroying the very Use of Words. He gives us the Instance of *Job* in the Verse of my Text. But, alas! who is there that would not think *Job* much happier, when his Substance was seven thousand Sheep, and three thousand Camels, and five thousand Yoke of Oxen, and five hundred She-Asses, and a very great Household, so that he was the greatest of all the Men of the East; when he was feasting with his seven Sons and three Daughters, and making them partake in his Prosperity and Grandeur; when, as he says, *the Young Men saw him, and hid themselves, and the Aged arose and stood up. The Princes refrained talking, and laid their Hand on their Mouth; the Nobles held their peace, and the Tongue cleaved to the*

The Blessedness of bearing

Roof of their Mouth; when the Ear heard him it blessed him, and when the Eye saw him it gave witness unto him; who, I say, would not think Job much happier in this State of Plenty and Prosperity, Respect and Esteem, than when he was deprived of all his Riches, and his Children were taken from him; when he was, moreover, smote with sore Boils, from the Sole of his Foot unto his Crown, and he took him a Potsherd to scrape himself withal, and sat down among the Ashes. When besides his Poverty and Sickness, he became the Contempt and Mockery of his Friends and Neighbours. When, as he complains, they that were younger than he, had him in Derision, whose Fathers he would have disdain'd to have set with the Dogs of his Flock. When he became the Song of Fools that were viler than the Earth; they abhorred him, they fled from him, they spared
not

not to spit in his Face, they marred his Path, and set forward his Calamity, and came upon him as a wide breaking in of Waters. Who, I say, would think this a Change for the better? or that these were Circumstances to be more happy in, than those before described? Seeing then the Matter before us, is plainly contrary to the common Sentiments of Mankind, we may be allowed to put these following Questions.

First, Who are they that count those Happy *which endure*?

Secondly, What sort of *enduring* is it which they count them happy in?

Thirdly, What sort of Happiness it is, which this *enduring* yields them?

To these Questions I shall endeavour to give a several and distinct Answer, in behalf of St. *James* and his Doctrine, and to clear the Truth from

The Blessedness of bearing

from those strange Difficulties, it seems, at the first Proposal, to be incumbred with.

First then, as to the Persons, who assert this strange Doctrine. They confess themselves to be Men of like Passions with us, they have no Privileges above the ordinary Rank of Men, nor pretend to any Exemption from any Frailty or Infirmary common to human Nature. They boast not of any Stoical Insensibility, but acknowledge that they have the same uneasy Perceptions of Sickness, of Loss, of Misfortunes, of Shame and Reproach, as other Men have. But the Particular in which they differ from other Men, and which is indeed the principal Ground of this odd Assertion of theirs, is a certain strong and lively Conviction of a future State of Existence, and that in that State every Degree of Virtue will be rewarded, and all Vice and Wickedness, without any respect

respect of Persons meet with a suitable Punishment. 'Tis very certain that there are innumerable Persons who pretend to believe the fore-mentioned Truths, and make daily Profession of such Belief, and who would be extremely provoked, should any one question the Sincerity of their Profession, who nevertheless would be in danger of making many sinful Compliances, rather than fall into such Sufferings, and are as uneasy as possible, under those lesser Calamities which befall them. These are none of the Persons we speak of; whose Convictions of a future State are so strong and lively, that they become a Principle of Action, and overbear the Power and Influence of the things of this Life.

Having thus far described to you the Persons, and shewn you, that they differ not from other Men, only in some certain Persuasions, or rather in the

The Blessedness of bearing

the Force and Vigour of those Persuasions ; let us go on and satisfy the second Question, which is, What they mean by *enduring*? For perhaps it may be some little inconsiderable Thing, which may not be very inconsistent with Happiness ; as we must all, the most prosperous of us, encounter some Evils in this Life; and though we cannot think that any sort of *enduring*, can, as such, add to our Happiness, yet we may, with them, *count such happy who endure*, if their Sufferings be very inconsiderable, and in all other respects they have their Hearts Desire.

In Answer to this Question then, let what was before said concerning *Job*, be call'd back to Remembrance; for such sort of *enduring* as his was, is here meant; than which, we can scarce conceive any greater. But the Apostle explains himself by other Instances and Examples. *Take*, says he,

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my Brethren, the Prophets, who have spoken in the Name of the Lord, for an Example of suffering Affliction, and Patience: Of whom I need give you no other Account, than what we find in Heb. xi. 35. some of whom were tortured, not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection. Others had Trials of cruel Mockings and Scourgings; yea moreover of Bonds and Imprisonments, &c.

Our Lord takes frequent Occasions of forewarning his Followers of the State of Suffering they should fall into, telling them the Necessity of forsaking all, even Life itself, for his Sake; that they should be delivered up, and killed, and hated of all Nations, for his Name's Sake; and that they who thus treated them, should think they did God good Service therein. In short, being acquainted with the Life and Death of Jesus Christ, we need no other Description of the Enduring
here

The Blessedness of bearing

here meant. For the Disciple was not to be above his Master, 'twas enough for him to be as his Master. Hereunto are ye called, says St. Peter, 1 Pet. ii. 21. because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that we should follow his Steps.

These, you will say, are very strange Circumstances to be happy in; and we would fain be resolved in our Third Question, and know how, what sort of Happiness these Persons can extract from Circumstances always thought and experienced to be most afflicting and grievous to Human Nature.

We count them happy which endure, my Brethren, says the same St. James: Count it all Joy, when ye fall into diverse Temptations: And again, *Blessed is the Man that endureth Temptation.* St. Peter says, If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye. And our Lord pronounces those blessed

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who were persecuted for Righteousness sake. He bids them rejoice, and be exceeding glad. From these Expressions we find, that this was a common and establish'd Opinion, That they were happy which endured; that these were not hasty and inconsiderate Words, nor the Assertion of a single Person, but the Judgment of one and all. And we may further infer, That it was no mean or ordinary Degree of Happiness which they pretended to, for that would ill comport with such strong Expressions as these, of *rejoicing and being exceeding glad* in their Sufferings, and *counting it all Joy when they fell into them.*

Let us then come a little nearer, and inquire into the Nature of this strange Happiness.

Whilst these Men, then, count themselves happy which endure, they frankly acknowledge, that no Affliction is for the present joyous, but grievous; but afterwards,

The Blessedness of bearing

wards, say they, it yields us the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness. Their Tribulations wrought Patience, their Patience Experience, and their Experience Hope. They always bore about in the Body, the Dying of the Lord Jesus, that the Life also of Jesus might be made manifest in their mortal Flesh. Sufferings, like those of Jesus, producing a Virtue that has some Resemblance of his, from which his Peace must be inseparable. Men who found this Effect from their Sufferings, could not but rejoice, and be exceeding glad, in such an Experience. But when we add to This, the Hope that follow'd; when their Convictions of a future State, and a righteous Judgment, grew still more lively and vigorous; being assured that the more unworthy things they suffer'd here, the greater would their Measures of Glory and Happiness be hereafter; no wonder they could submit to those Evils with Alacrity,
which

which other Men avoid with all their Industry. No wonder that *they, to whom it was given*, in the Behalf of Christ, not only *to believe on him*, but also *to suffer for his Sake*, were in nothing terrify'd by their *Adversaries*; which to Them was an evident Token of *Perdition*, but to These of *Salvation*, and that of *God*. No wonder that *they gloried in Tribulations, in Distresses and Persecutions*, when in all these things they were more than Conquerors; when they yielded them an hundred fold in this World, and insur'd to them in the World to come, a Life everlasting. 'Twas the Joy that was set before our Lord, which enabled him to endure the Cross, and despise the Shame. Rejoice, says St. Peter, inasmuch as ye are Partakers of the Sufferings of Christ, that when his Glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding Joy. A future Prospect in this Life, will animate our Hopes,

The Blessedness of bearing

and quicken our Industry, and prolong our Patience, and carry us thro' many Labours and great Difficulties; no wonder then, that a lively Sense of Eternal Rewards, with some Earnest also of that Inheritance paid down in Hand, should sweeten the Toils of Virtue, and arm us with Patience and Fortitude; and even find a *Blessedness* in those Afflictions, by which our Faith is strengthened, and every Grace improved; that it should find *Meat in the Eater*, and *Sweetness in the Destroyer*; a Riddle to the *Philistins*.

We see then, who the Persons are who *count them happy which endure*; what *Enduring* they mean; and what sort of *Happiness* they extract from it. In all which, how strange soever the Assertion might appear to the first Thought, there is nothing but what is not only clear, intelligible, and consistent, but you see a *Truth*, a Piece of Divine Philosophy of the utmost

most *Use* and Importance to Mankind; who live in a World abounding with Crosses and Disappointments, with various Miseries and Calamities, and which is also introductory to another, and dispos'd in every Particular to subserve the Interests of it. Now, I say, no Doctrine can be of greater Use and Importance to us, than that, which thus teaches us to improve the very *Evils* and Miseries of this Life; to overcome the World, and its severest Trials; to extract Pleasure from Pain, Honour from Reproaches, and Peace from Persecution.

This Doctrine I thought, above all others, the most seasonable at this Time, and in this Place, where every Heart of every Order and Degree of Men amongst us, must necessarily be full of Trouble under our late common Loss. Who is there among us that has not shared, either the Friend-

The Blessedness of bearing

ship and Favour, or the Munificence and Generosity, or the Hospitality and Charity of our late most excellent Prelate*. And we seem now to be as a Family deprived of its Master, as Children who have lost a tender Parent, comfortless Orphans! It very rarely happens, that so great an Ability to do good, so strong an Inclination, and so clear a Judgment to direct them, do meet together in one Person.

If we consider him barely *as a Man*, under those Relations which are common to the whole Species; and search the World around us, we shall not be able to find in any Person a more strict Justice, a more exact Veracity, or a greater Benevolence and Compassion; cleaner Hands, or a more tender Heart.

If we consider him further *as a Gentleman*, a Character which adds a Refinement to Humanity, which im-

* Dr. Waddington.

proves

proves the Manner, and raises the Gracefulness, and imparts a Delicacy to Actions, we shall find him here most studious to avoid every thing that might be offensive; so happy in his Address and Manner, that every Favour he bestowed was doubly enhanced by it; every Refusal became an Obligation, and every Reproof, which was extorted from him, so mitigated and softened, that it melted the Heart of the Offender, and prepared it for the most effectual Impressions. I need say no more on this Head, than that his Table was crowded, and his Friendship sought, by Persons of the most refined Taste, and of the highest Rank and Quality, and that he has left behind him in the Palace, a very expensive, a very elegant and lasting Monument, of his excelling in this Character.

If we consider him as *a Christian*, a Character, which raises our Ideas and en-

The Blessedness of bearing

larges our Expectations, we shall scarce find it better filled in any Age, than it was by him in this, confessedly, very corrupt and degenerate one. He was a *burning and shining Light in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation*. Burning inwardly, and shining outwardly. His Piety was unaffected, his Faith unfeigned, not dead, but fruitful of good Works; His Hope full of Assurance, well-grounded, held fast, and improved even unto the End; His Charity unbounded and universal; swallowing up and superseding private Friendships; the whole Race of Mankind were his Neighbours; and they who did the Will of his Father which is in Heaven, the same were his Brother and Sister and Mother.

If we consider him as a *Protestant Christian*, who could have a juster Sense of our happy Reformation, or a greater Dread of the Return of Popish

Popish Tyranny, Superstition, and Idolatry, or a more sincere and zealous Attachment to the Protestant Succession in the most illustrious House of *Hanover*, the great Bulwark both of our Natural, Civil, and Religious Rights and Liberties.

Lastly, Let us view him in his highest Station and Character, as a *Christian Bishop*. To say, that he was not given to Wine, was no Striker, not greedy of filthy Lucre, not a Brawler, not covetous, would be a very mean and low Representation of him. He was vigilant, sober, of good Behaviour, given to Hospitality, apt to teach, one that rul'd well his own House, and took care of the Church of God, the spiritual Family committed to his Trust, having his Children in Subjection, with all Gravity. I cannot but take especial Notice of two Particulars relating to this Part of his Character. The first; his Aptness to Teach, and especially

The Blessedness of bearing

his great Industry in instructing the Youth, and adapting himself to the tenderest Age, and meanest Capacity. As he executed this Work with great Pains and Diligence, so did he also single it out with good Judgment. Early Impressions are known to be lasting. When the Field is once overrun with Briars and Thorns, it is often too late to attempt the Cultivation of it; after-Instructions are choaked and fruitless; he knew the most effectual Way to do Good was to begin soon, before the Mind is prepossessed and tainted. He finished his Catechetical Lectures the *Sunday* before he finished his Course, a Circumstance he thought remarkable, and which gave him no ordinary Comfort in his last Sickness. The other Particular was, his great Zeal for the Lord's House. God had blessed him with a plentiful Fortune, and given him a prudent and generous Heart to dispose of it.

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He may justly be said in general not to be born for himself, or to have liv'd to himself. But his religious Bounty was most remarkable and extraordinary; He was barely a Steward of his Church Revenues for the Benefit of the Church; and could we know as much of his private Charities as we do of his publick, and had he lived to have accomplished his Design of augmenting the poor Vicarages of his Diocese, those especially of the Bishop's Patronage, it is highly probable He would have been impoverished by his Promotion. He would not offer unto the Lord of that which cost him nothing, but was a King and Priest unto God. Upon the whole, we may safely affirm, that Justice and Mercy, Complaisance and Sincerity, Generosity and Oeconomy, Piety and Power, never resided together in one Person in a sweeter Harmony.

Could

The Blessedness of bearing, &c.

Could he now speak to us, he would with his usual Tenderness, say to us in our Lord's Words, *Weep not for me, ye Sons and Daughters of Jerusalem, but weep for your selves and for your Children.*

But I fear, that in this short and very imperfect Recital of the Character of this Good Man, I have made those Wounds to bleed a-fresh, which it was my Intention to close up and heal. Let us therefore recollect the Doctrine of my Text; let us make this great and affecting Loss, an Exercise and Improvement of our Patience and Resignation, of our Faith and Hope; so shall we extract from it the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness. Let us reverence his Memory, and follow his Example, and copy his Virtues, that where he is, there we may be also; where all Tears shall be wiped away from our Eyes, and there shall be no Sorrow nor any more Pain.

DIS-



DISCOURSE X.

The Duty and Advantage of bearing
one another's Burdens.

GAL. vi. 2.

*Bear ye one another's Burdens, and so
fulfil the Law of Christ.*

IT is implied in these Words
that every Man has his Bur-
dens; and it may be thought
sufficient for every one to
bear his own: and an Injunction up-
on Creatures, every one of whom are
already weary and heavy laden, to
bear not only their own, but other
Mens

The Duty of bearing

Men's Burdens too, seems to carry in it, a great deal of Hardship and Severity: It looks more like the arbitrary Law of a cruel Tyrant, than the kind Direction of a tender and compassionate Governor.

But as we are in general assured, that the Law of Christ, is a Law of Love; that he came into the World not to destroy, but to save, not to add to the Miseries of Mankind, but to enlarge their Happiness, both in this World and the next, and that he even laid down his Life for this Purpose; so we need not be discouraged in our Inquiries into the Meaning of any of his Precepts; seeing if we hit upon a right Interpretation of them, we are secure of finding something very useful and advantageous to us. Every Interpretation of every Law of Christ, which is not evidently promotive of the Perfection and Happiness of Mankind, must be a false Interpretation. As

As to the Particular before us; It is evident enough that Mankind are laden with many Burdens, many natural Infirmities, many acquir'd Weaknesses, many necessary Wants, many artificial ones. Our Reason is weak, and our Passions are strong; our Bodies infirm, and expos'd to a Multitude of Pains and Diseases; our very Pleasures are so deceitful, that they are commonly our greatest Plagues. But there is no need to enlarge upon the Miseries of Mankind, which we all feel within our selves, and know to be common to our whole Species.

The great Question now before us is, Whether it be fit for Creatures, thus constituted, and thus exposed, to bear one another's Burdens; for Us who have so many Wants of our own to provide for, so many Difficulties to encounter, who have so many Engagements already upon our hands, to enter farther into the Concerns of Others,

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Others, and load our selves with their Burdens, and make their Labours, their Calamities and Sorrows, our own.

Now, in order to resolve this Question, let us suppose, that Mankind liv'd a-part by themselves, absolutely disengaged from each other, and that every one's whole Care and Concern center'd entirely in himself; that all avoided each other, that all sort of Conversation, Commerce and mutual Communication was sunk, and that every one took upon himself wholly to provide for himself, without any kind of Regard to any other Person or thing whatsoever.

What the State and Condition of Mankind would in this Case be, whether their Burdens would be lessened or increased, is not at all difficult to conceive or determine.

Where every one must build for himself, and cloath himself, and provide

vide for the Sustainance of his Body, for his Health and Pleasure, the Provision would be very coarse, and mean, and scanty; here could be no Magnificence, no Elegance, no Variety; the Sick, the Weak, and the Aged must languish and pine away by themselves, and starve without any Relief or Comfort, and rot within their Huts without any other Burying-place. All Language would become useless, and of Course cease, nay, and the whole Race of Mankind must cease also, they could be Creatures only of one Age; for in such State there could be no Continuation of the Species, the very Supposition of which implies a little Community, a common Interest, and social Virtue.

If we should suppose further, that not only all social Intercourse was suspended, but that all the vindictive Passions of human Nature were let loose, discharg'd of all their Restraints,

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The Duty of bearing

(a Supposition which is inseparable from the foregoing ; for where a common Interest does not make us Friends, separate and opposite Interests will assuredly make us Enemies) did every one pursue his own Pleasure, not only without any Regard to the Happiness of others, but also, without any Regard to the Miseries and Cruelties he inflicted on them ; this would open such a Scene, as we could not endure so much as the Description of.

The mere Imagination of a State which never was, and never will be, may be thought entirely useless ; but let us consider that we see those things very clearly in their Extremes, which we take little or no Notice of in their lower Degrees ; Things must be drawn in very strong Colourings to awaken the Attention of the careless and negligent, and to overcome Prejudice and Obstinacy. And if an absolute Disregard of other Mens Burdens would

so evidently and flagrantly increase our own, would destroy not only every kind of Happiness we are capable of, but our very Being itself, we may be assured, that every Approach, every Step of Advance towards this Extreme, will carry with it proportionable Mischiefs.

Neither is the State of things before describ'd, in all its Parts a mere Imagination or Fiction. There are many Nations in the World, so savage, so much Strangers to the Laws and Interests of Society, that they are but very narrowly removed from Brutes: Such is their State, that even their being made Slaves by civiliz'd Nations, is a real Benefit and Advantage to them. And in the best constituted Governments, when the Publick has been dissolved, and the One Body broken and divided into Factions, and instead of a Commonwealth, opposite Interests have been set

The Duty of bearing

on foot, those very Persons, who before administer'd mutually to each other's Security and Happiness, have thrown up the Reins to Rage and Violence, have gloried in all kinds of Cruelty and Inhumanity, and made the Sword drunk with each other's Blood.

It is evident from the Make and Constitution of Man, that he was design'd for Society; he has many Faculties wholly appropriated to this purpose; and it is as evident, that Society, but tolerably well order'd, must greatly ease the Burdens of Mankind. Weak Creatures, uniting their several Degrees of Strength, must form a compact Body capable of defending it self; ignorant Creatures, communicating to each other their several Observations, Experiences and Discoveries, and this continued down from one Generation to another, must, in time, furnish out a considerable

Stock

Stock of Knowledge; and where each applies himself to one particular Labour or Study, each must be dextrous and skilful in that Particular; continual Improvements must be made in every Particular, and every one enjoy the Industry and Art of all; all furnishing out mutually their several Quota's either of Pleasure or Improvement; of something necessary to Life, or ornamental, or entertaining; of some additional Strength, or Security to Society in general. Thus you see, that Man, who consider'd a-part by himself, in a State of Solitude and Independency, would be ignorant and unpolished, savage and brutal, weak and defenceless, miserable and comfortless, is quite another sort of Creature in Society, powerful, wise and happy: How many Reliefs has he here from his Burdens? how many Supplies for his Wants? how many Entertainments for his Appetites? how many Re-

medies for his Disorders? how many Comforts in his Troubles? Our Burdens are, in Truth, the Foundation and Source of our Pleasures; our Wants, of the Plenty we enjoy; our separate Weaknesses and Ignorance, of all our Strength and Knowledge. We cannot well conceive how an imperfect Being can be happy alone. Let his Station be what it will, the Intercourse of other Beings must be of Advantage to him. The worst-constituted Government is therefore plainly better than none; and to be exposed to the Caprice or Cruelty of one, or more Men, in our Fortunes and Lives, is much rather to be chosen, than to be exposed in a like manner to every Man. It is much to be feared, that those Men who have attempted the Dissolution of States, have acted rather from Resentment than Reason. Be the Disease what it will, this Remedy is too dangerous a

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one to be apply'd hastily. A Rebellion of one Year's Continuance, is likely to produce greater Irregularities and Mischiefs, than a very bad Government in a Century. And at last, the wisest Head in the World can never foresee, whether this Way of mending the Publick, may not spoil it still more, whether it may not settle upon a worse Basis than that, upon which it stood, before its Dissolution. What has been called the Logick of Kings, is very unfit for the Heads of other Men.

Thus we see in a mere Civil or Political View, that bearing one another's Burdens is of very great Use to Mankind, is the Band of all Society, the Source of all our worldly Happiness; the more any Community has provided for this Particular in its Laws and Establishments, the more happy and flourishing must it be.

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But let us go on and consider the *bearing one another's Burdens* as a Law of Christ, as a fulfilling the Law of Christ, and we shall see it in a still more glorious and beatifick Light.

Let human Prudence do what it can, its Laws can never be so form'd as to provide for every particular Case. Besides, the Execution of the best Laws will often fall into bad Hands. Again, the Subtle will evade them; the Great will be above 'em; and the Poor and Indigent, who most want their Relief and Protection, will often be unable to procure them; so that let publick Matters be ever so well - constituted, and administer'd, there will be still great Room for the Exercise of private Goodness and Virtue. And here the Laws of Christ come in as the most noble Supplement, not only as they teach all Instances of Virtue in the clearest and most familiar manner, but as they enforce

enforce it too, by the most evident and awful Sanctions. His Kingdom is not of this World; He left the Kingdoms of this World as he found them; but his Doctrine is such, as must if attended to, reform and improve, not only every Kingdom, but every single Person in the World. To suppose that Christ brought Life and Immortality to light thro' the Gospel, and that the eternal Rewards and Punishments, he has assign'd to Virtue and Vice, should have no Effect upon the Conduct of Mankind in this Life, is the greatest Reflection upon Mankind imaginable.

Bear ye one another's Burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ. His Commandment is that we *love one another, as he loved us*; How he loved us we all know; upon these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets, and the Gospel too; viz. upon the Love of God and our Neighbour.

The Duty of bearing

bour. The Law of God is, *to keep his Commandments*, and to keep his Commandments is, *to love one another*. The Articles upon which we shall be examined at the Great day, are, whether we have *given Meat to the Hungry, and Drink to the Thirsty*; whether we have *cloathed the Naked, and visited the Sick, and the Prisoner*. These are plain things which want no Definitions or Distinctions, there is no need of Subtlety to teach or comprehend them. All the Law is fulfilled in one Word, even in this, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*; surely we know how we love our selves. We cannot love our selves, we injure our selves in every View, if we do not love our Neighbour as our selves. Is any thing so agreeable to our Reason and delightful to our Consciences? I might say so pleasant to the whole System of our Affections, as to relieve the Necessitous, and comfort the Afflicted? Can any thing

thing more promote our social Happiness? what better Commerce or Correspondence can the whole World furnish forth than this? what more promotive of our own personal Happiness? Let those Passions which are called selfish, produce their Pleasures; place Pride and Ambition, Envy and Revenge, Luxury and Avarice, on the one hand, and Benevolence and Charity, Pity and Compassion, on the other; view them as they lie in the Mind of Man; view them in their Intercourse with others; Can any thing be more self-tormenting than *those*, more unamiable, more injurious? Whilst the *other* are a Fund of Peace and Pleasure; they dispense them all around, and have them reflected back on them from every side.

Human Laws may be fulfilled with little or no Virtue, and when they are fulfilled, much Misery will be at last unprovided for; but Christ is a Judge

The Duty of bearing

Judge who knoweth the very Secrets of our Hearts, his Law lays hold of our Consciences, his Rewards must be equally and impartially distributed; so that here is a Provision made for the Calamities of Life, which it is impossible for any thing human to furnish forth. We are naturally apt to have a greater Regard to our own Pleasures than other Mens, and to provide for our future Wants, without duely considering the present Necessities of others; but the Law of Christ, you see, over-bears our selfish, and short-sighted Affections; it opens to us a new and everlasting Interest, which is to be promoted only by Charity and Generosity; *a Life to come*, to provide for which is of infinitely greater Concern to us, than any of the Cares of *this* can be. We should therefore make unto ourselves Friends of the *Mammon* of Unrighteousness, by distributing freely to the Necessities of others,

others, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting Habitations.

The only Observation I shall make upon the whole is this, That as bearing one another's Burdens is fulfilling the Law of Christ, so it behoves us to try our Faith by our Works, our Christianity by our Charity, without which, our Faith is vain, and our Religion errant Superstition. I need not tell you that the Law of Christ has been frequently interpreted to the mutual Destruction of Mankind; that all Denominations of Christians have in their turns admitted such Interpretations, and shewn a greater Zeal for them, than the Truth has ever been favour'd with, since the Primitive Times. I need not tell you that this was fulfilling the Law of the Devil, who was a Murderer and Destroyer from the Beginning. They who have made it their Business to oppress and enslave, or in any respect to increase

crease the Miseries of others, Have treasured up only Wrath against the Day of Wrath, when every one shall receive, according to his Works: whilst the Merciful shall receive Mercy and be admitted into the Joy of their Lord.



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DISCOURSE XI.

The Motives and Mischief of
Defamation.

I PET. iii. 8.

Love as Brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.

I HAVE taken frequent Occasions of shewing you, in how strong a manner, universal Love and Benevolence are press'd upon us in the Writings of the New-Testament; that they are called the *End of the Commandment* and the *fulfilling of the Law*. The Apostle in the Words following my
Text

Text recommends a particular Branch of Benevolence, which, tho' it be of the utmost Importance, is generally overlook'd and neglected; and that not only by the Vicious and Profane, but by the better Sort of Men; and tho' it be one of the greatest and most pernicious, is scarce deem'd any Breach of Charity at all; nay, is often gloried in, as worthy and meritorious, by those who, perhaps, would not readily offend in any other way. The Apostle goes on, *not rendering Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing, but contrariwise Blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto call'd, that ye should inherit a Blessing. For he that will love Life, and see good Days, let him refrain his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they speak no Guile.* You see the Apostle does particularly recommend Love, Pity, and Courteousness in our Conversation, he forbids us to render Railing for Railing, and tells us, that
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the way to enjoy Life and to see good Days is to restrain our Tongues from Evil.

I shall observe to you in the *First* Place, how frequent Offences of this kind are, with the Reasons of it.

Secondly, How pernicious they are not only to others, but to our selves.

And *Lastly*, Exhort you to embrace the contrary Behaviour from the Blessings that attend it.

First then, I shall take notice of the Frequency of the Malevolence of the Tongue, and inquire into the Reasons of it.

We can scarce fall into any Company, in which either the real Failings and Misfortunes of others, or else those that are merely fictitious and imaginary, are not the common Topick of Discourse. We may observe

serve, that upon all other Subjects, most Men are under Difficulties, and at a loss to support Conversation; there is generally a Reservedness, and long Pauses and Intervals of Silence will intervene; but when Scandal comes upon the Board, every one finds a Fluency of Speech, all are Wits and Orators, every one's Quiver is full-fraught, every one is a shrewd Archer in discharging those Arrows, which are bitter Words. This Game is no sooner started, but we see the most Dull and Indifferent, the most Silent and Insipid, rous'd to the Pursuit; there is an Eagerness, a general Emulation who shall excel, who shall be foremost in the cruel Chace; as tho' Mankind were form'd to vilify and abuse, to tear and devour one another.

When we consider the social Qualifications of human Nature, and the great Variety of Pleasures and Endearments which

which result from the right Exercise of them; one would think it almost impossible, for Creatures so endowed and so bless'd, to misapply such Faculties, and pervert such Opportunities, to the very opposite Uses; to make those Powers, which in their open and natural Tendency invite us into a School of Improvement, into an Assembly of Pleasure, into all possible Offices of mutual Benevolence and Friendship, a Source of Debate and Discord, of Hatred and Variance, Strife and Envy.

How we are drawn into this Conduct, what are the Causes of this perverse Behaviour, is an Inquiry of great Importance to us, and well worth our engaging in; the more particular and minute we are in tracing the Causes of this Malady, the better able shall we be to administer a proper Remedy.

Pride mix'd with Envy, has been usually assign'd, as the principal Cause of our delighting in lessening the Reputation, and blasting the good Name of others. And most certain it is, that Pride and Envy have a real Interest, and enjoy a great Satisfaction, in lowering those who are placed above them, and removing those who stand in their Way, intercept their Views, and retard their Progress. Envy and Pride are Affections which cannot be concealed, and it is as open, that they are great Promoters of Scandal. In Confirmation of this, we may observe, that our Malevolence is always keenest against those who are our Rivals or Competitors in any Particular; and that we are never forward to expose any Failing in others which we are conscious to our selves that others may observe in us; in these Instances, we rather put on the Appearance

pearance of Good-nature, and vindicate those Follies, and that even in Men whom we hate, which we our selves are liable to; because this is an indirect Vindication of our selves. A very ingenious Writer, who compares human Life to a Race, and undertakes to describe all the Passions of Mankind, from the Circumstances of a Race, says, that *Pride is an Endeavour to be foremost, and Envy a stopping one who has out-run us.* And it must be allowed, that a very common Artifice to effect this, is Scandal and Defamation. But we must not assign these as the only Causes of this Conduct. For we find Men frequently vilifying those who are not above or before them, from whom they are in no sort jealous of any Competition. In these Cases therefore, Envy can no ways be concern'd, and some other Cause must be inquired after.

And here we seem to be moved by a Desire of pleasing others, of entertaining the present Company agreeably, of making them and our selves appear considerable; for whilst we are exposing any Weaknesses in others, which we our selves, and the Persons we converse with, are exempt from, we are tacitly displaying our own, and their Eminence; and, with great Subtlety, model Scandal into a very pleasant Species of Flattery; which all swallow greedily, tho' it is not particularly address'd, or directly apply'd to any. And that this is really the Case, will be evident from this Observation, that whenever we make those beneath us the Subject of our Railery, we always single out the Want of those particular Accomplishments, for which we more especially value our selves. If we value our selves for our Understanding in any Particular, then the Ignorance and Blunders of others

others in that very Particular; if for our Riches, then the Poverty of others; if for our Dress, or Mein, or Stature, or any other Particular, then the Defects of others in that Particular, shall become our darling Subject of Scandal and Ridicule.

So that you see, and may in all Instances experience, when our Malevolence is directed against those *above* us, by *Pride* and *Envy*; we attack them in those things in which they *excel* us: and when it is directed against those *beneath* us, we attack them in the Particulars in which *we* excel *them*.

But Scandal is too various to be limited to these two Kinds, or to proceed wholly from the Causes before assign'd. In order therefore to see further into its Composition, we may observe, that all the Retailers of Scandal, of which one or more are to be found in every Place, who make it

their Business to dispense it to the Neighbourhood who are content to receive it from their Hands; I say, we may observe, that they are generally Persons of no stated Employment, Calling or Occupation, and that Idleness is one strong Ingredient of this Vice. St. Paul, in his Description of the female Sort of them, begins it with this very Particular, speaking of the younger Widows, he says, *they learn to be idle, wandering about from House to House, and not only idle, but Tatlers also, and busy Bodies, speaking things which they ought not. Busy Bodies in other Mens Matters, and wandering about from House to House, principally for this Reason, because they have no proper Employment of their own at home.*

We may observe further, that innumerable other Vices enter into the Composition of Scandal, such as Lying and Treachery, Disingenuity and Baseness, Fawning and Flattery, Cowardice,

wardice, and as much Cruelty as Cowardice will admit, a Readiness to say or unsay, to do or undo any thing which Occasion seems to call for. *St. Paul* joins with the *Backbiters*, those who were full of all Wickedness, Covetousness, Maliciousness; full of Envy, Murder, Debate, Deceit, Malignity, Whisperers, Haters of God, Despiteful, Proud, Boasters, Inventors of evil things, disobedient to Parents, without Understanding, Covenant-Breakers, without natural Affection, implacable, unmerciful. Such are the Causes, or at least the Concomitants of this Vice; such the Assembly of its Qualities, a Disease perhaps the most, and the worst complicated, of any we are acquainted with.

Having thus far enquired into the Causes which generally move Men to Slander and Railing, I shall,

Secondly, enquire into the mischievous Consequences of it both to our selves

and others.-- The Offspring of such Parents can be no other than a Monster.

A good Name is evidently one of the greatest Blessings, 'tis what we all cultivate with our utmost Industry, we are more jealous and delicate in this Particular than any other, being sensible of the many Pleasures it lets us into, and of the many Miseries which follow the Loss of it. 'Tis our Reputation that opens the Door of Society to us, that gains us an easy and free Commerce one with another, that makes every Man receive us with Chearfulness, and treat us with Confidence, and is the Basis of all social Happiness; which is indeed almost all the Happiness we enjoy in this Life. The Loss of our Reputation shuts the Door of Society against us, makes every Man shy towards us, we are treated with Distrust and Jealousy, if not wholly excluded from the Conversation and Commerce of the

the World; it brings us into a State not unlike that of *Cain's*, we have a Mark set on our Foreheads, and every one who finds us shall slay us. So that Defamation strikes at the very Foundation of all our Interests and Enjoyments, and where it prevails, does most effectually destroy them; what may be intended only as Diversion by the Slanderer, is often to the Slander'd, Destruction and Ruin. He casteth Firebrands, Arrows and Death, and saith, *Am I not in sport?*

As these Wounds are generally secret and in the Dark, so it is for the most part difficult for the injur'd Person to do himself Justice; if Enquiry be made after the Author, he shall be the first to express his Surprize and Indignation, and vindicates your Cause before your Face, in order to throw off the Suspicion from himself; tho' behind your Back, he becomes more industrious to repeat and increase the
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Injury. 'Tis here the Serpent exerts his Venom and his Subtlety together, and practises all his crooked Wiles.

But notwithstanding this, how often do we see his Head bruised, and the very Shame and Reproach which he aims at others, recoil upon himself. A Lying Tongue is but for a Moment; even they, who love this sort of Treason, hate the Traitor: Tho' they are gratify'd in their Ill-nature, by Turns, at the Expence of others; yet, as every one must take his Turn in furnishing out the same Entertainment, at the same Cost, so the infamous Entertainer is sure in the End to raise the Resentment and Hatred of all; and become the common Butt of their Scandal and Revenge. We cannot but have observed, that the Slanderer soon becomes the most infamous Person; that he is avoided and deserted by all; that his servile Fawning sinks below the meanest Pride; and

and Ill-nature, instead of gratifying the most Splenetick, incenses them. We must have observed, that he is always seeking out for fresh Acquaintance, and that whilst his new Friendships last but for a Day, the Enmities he raises continue for ever.

To exhort the Slanderer to alter his Conduct, upon account of the Mischiefs he brings upon others, may be thought a very absurd Topick, because those Mischiefs are his Pleasures, and he delights in Wrong and Robbery; but all who offend in this way, are not arrived to this high Pitch of Iniquity; there are many who are free with their Neighbour's Reputation, to gratify a present Passion of their own or other Mens, who would be unwilling to give him any real Pain, or do him any considerable Injury: Such Men should learn to reflect upon the Consequences of their Actions; and should observe more particularly, what sort of
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of Sentiments arise in them, when they themselves are abus'd and vilify'd; this would be a strong Check against treating others in a manner which they themselves have experienced to be so bitter and pungent. We have no Sensation so painful as that which is caused by Mockery, Insult and unjust Reproach. Was this duely consider'd, we should as soon whet our Sword as our Tongue, and wound the Body, or assault the Life of our Neighbour, as his good Name, which *Solomon* declares to be dearer than Life itself. To lose one's Friend rather than one's Jest, is foolish jesting indeed.

As for the Slanderers of the first Class, those who are mov'd by Pride and Envy, together with that monstrous Train of Vices before enumerated, 'tis plain, that all Admonition to them must be fruitless, except what turns upon their own immediate

diate and personal Interest. If then this Method of aggrandizing themselves be preposterous, and does in the most effectual manner, defeat the End they aim at, if the Slanderer soon becomes the most infamous and detestable Person of all others, if he exposes himself to Shame, in every Step he takes for his Advancement, as has been already made appear, then he ought to enter upon the opposite Conduct, to obtain the end he proposes.

Nothing can be more evident, than that he, who stops another in the Race of Life, and endeavours to hold him back in his Progress, must lose ground himself, and give those who were behind him, Time and Opportunity of getting before him; and that such, who instead of pressing forward to the Goal, are catching at every one, who is like to pass by them, and tripping up their Heels, must move the Indignation of all,

all, and meet with more Hindrances himself than he can possibly give others; for whilst he would hinder all, he can hinder but one at a time, and every one of them stops him. Pity, by the Author of this beautiful Allegory, is defin'd to be a Helping up one, who has fallen in the Race; this may appear as an Impediment to the Short-sighted; but there is nothing which can forward us more effectually. For he, who has been helpful to many, shall have many Hands to guard his Course, to lead him on, to raise him when down, and to serve every Occasion which offers. Let the Slanderer only observe, how acceptable the Piti-ful and the Courteous are to all those who can draw a Veil over the Infirmities, and extenuate the Faults of others, how universal are their Friendships, how extensive their Credit and Reputation, with what Ease and Freedom, and Applause they pass through
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the World, even without the Assistance of any other Talents, how inoffensive and unoffended, how lovely and how beloved; let him compare them with his own unamiable Tribe, under all their Accomplishments of Wit and Raillery, Satyr and Buffoonery, let him compare the Tenor of their Lives, the Consequences of their Behaviour, and if he has any Remains of Judgment left, he will imitate the Pitiful and the Courteous, even to serve the Purposes of Pride and Envy. The selfish Affections, when they exclude the social, are in every Instance destructive; 'tis the Exercise of the social Affections only, as balanced by the Selfish, that can advance our Perfection, and make us happy in ourselves, and with one another. Ambition is one of the noblest Principles implanted in human Nature; it is a Desire of excelling others. Pride is the Abuse or Misapplication of it; which

which is only an imagining we do excel others. Emulation naturally follows Ambition, it is a bringing it into Act, it is an Endeavour to excel others in some one particular Instance; the Abuse of this is Envy, which does as naturally follow Pride, and is as true to its Interests; for Envy is a bringing Pride into Act, or an Endeavour to support or increase a mere imaginary Excellence in some one Particular; which is to be effected only by lessening or debasing that particular Excellence. In Confirmation of these Definitions, we may observe, that Ambition and Emulation always lessen the Defects and Failings, and aggravate the Worth and Virtue of their Competitors, that they may raise the Glory of their Competition; whereas Pride and Envy take the very opposite Method in a Cause that is opposite, aggravating the Imperfections and Vices, and lessening the Accomplishments

plishments of their Rivals, that their imaginary Worth may better make its way.

Now which of these two is more likely to make its way, and carry its purpose? a real Desire of Worth and Excellence, and an Endeavour to copy it, in every Instance; or a mere Imagination of them, and an Endeavour only to depreciate them, where they appear in their brightest Colours? Alas! real Worth is easily distinguished from the mere Affectation of it, especially when that Affectation is attended with the blackest Deformities. Alas! the most Ignorant learn to see thro' this, and the meanest to despise it; in-somuch that Ambition and Emulation, even when they do not succeed, are admired and applauded by the greatest Souls, whilst Pride and Envy, when they do, are detested by the Meanest. It is evident to the most vulgar Observation, whether is employed most worthily, most suitably

to the End proposed, they who pass over the Failings of others, and fix upon their Excellencies in order to copy them in their Manners, and raise themselves to equal or superior Degrees of Virtue; or they who pass over the Virtues of others, and dwell upon, and inhance, their Defects and Vices, only to bring them down beneath themselves, and to render a false Eminence the more conspicuous. What, cannot Wit subsist without Satyr? May it not shine in the Praise, as well as blacken in the Defamation of others? Can the Buffoon find nothing to mimick but the Deformities of human Nature? Are there no Graces to be copied, no Virtues to be imitated? Is it matter of Pride for him to demean himself to an Ape, who is by Nature placed but a little lower than the Angels? Can the Idle find no Employment, in the infinite Variety, more beneficial to themselves, and useful

ful to others? Cannot they, who, from their Station in Life, may think themselves placed above Business, better employ their great Opportunities? Can the Learned, in this vast and immense Field, chuse out no worthier, no more entertaining Subject of Conversation?

'Tis fit the Vices of others should be observed and reprov'd; but is there not an open, generous and manly Way of doing this? a Way in which we may reform their Faults without exposing their Persons.

I am very sensible that the inveterate Slanderer is the most incorrigible of all Creatures; the more closely you apply to him, the more you irritate the Disease you endeavour to cure: He is to be taught only by that Rod which is prepared for the Back of Fools: Bray him in a Mortar, yet will not his Foolishness depart from him. They however, who are less ad-

vanced in this monstrous Iniquity, 'tis to be hoped, may receive some Instruction from this Discourse, and learn to reform a Conduct which is so plainly absurd, and destructive of its own Purposes, in this Life. We may carry on our Exhortation to these Men, from Motives deduced from the Life to come: not rendering *Evil for Evil*, or *Railing for Railing*, says the Apostle, but contrariwise, *Blessing, knowing that thereunto ye are called, that ye may inherit a Blessing*. What Place can these Sowers of perpetual Discord and Dissention expect to find in the Inheritance of the Saints in Light and Love? If ever there is a Separation to be made, betwixt the pitiful and courteous part of Mankind, from the malevolent and spiteful; if the Prince of Darkness, and the Father of Lyes, and the Accuser of the Brethren, is to have any Associates, doubtless they, who have enter'd so deeply

into his Manners, must be Partakers with him in his everlasting Torments. Let us not, upon this important Occasion, make use of the common Artifice, whereby Men evade the Force of all moral Instructions. When any Vice is treated and exposed, we immediately single out some Person who is notorious for it, and make the whole Application to him, wiping our own Mouths, and acquitting ourselves, who appear at first View to be much less concern'd. Let us not, I say, delude our selves with this Artifice. Our own Reformation is nearest to us. Would the inferior Dealers in Scandal reform their Conduct, and openly discountenance this Practice wheresoever it occur'd, the more eminent ones, meeting with so many Rebuffs, would be greatly discouraged; their Sphere of Activity would be much contracted, and their Reign still shorter than it is; and we might

hope to see them soon as much avoided, or rather as eagerly pursued on all hands, as Highway-men and Robbers, who are by far less frequent and less pernicious to Society.



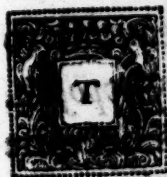


DISCOURSE XII.

Moderation stated and explained.

PHIL. iv. 5.

*Let your Moderation be known unto all
Men. The Lord is at hand.*



THE Word in the Original, which is here translated *Moderation*, sometimes signifies *Meekness*, a yielding and dispassionate Temper, a Readiness to forgive Injuries, and to be reconciled to our Enemies. It is also sometimes used for *Moderation*; in which Sense I shall discourse upon it more at large, and enforce the Duty injoin'd from

the Motive in my Text, *The Lord is at hand.*

By *Moderation* then, we are to understand such a Conduct as keeps in the Middle-way, avoiding the Extremes on either hand; neither coming short, nor exceeding, in any Particular. There is no Character or Circumstance of Life whatsoever, in which we are not liable to err; to be immoderate; to deviate from the Middle-path, the Line of Duty; and it is a common Observation, That those Persons who find themselves in one Extreme, whilst they endeavour to avoid *that*, run into the very *opposite*. *From one Extreme to another*, is become a Proverbial Saying. And if Men, upon the Discovery of one Piece of Immoderation, and in their Endeavours to avoid it, are thus apt to transgress on the very opposite Side, we need not wonder, that the generality of the World, who perhaps have never given them-

themselves much Care or Thought about the Matter, live in a continued, uninterrupted Extravagance; are always cutting the Line of Duty, or flying further from it, and never make three Steps directly forward.

It must be allow'd, that it is very difficult, if not impossible, for such frail and ignorant Creatures as we are, to know the exact Mean, in *all* Cases, or perhaps in *any*. In things relating to our own Welfare and Preservation; to our Neighbour's; to the Community, there are so many Particulars absolutely out of our View, that we can never be thoroughly certain in the Choice of our Actions, that this Action will directly promote our Purpose in either Relation, more than any other Action somewhat differently circumstantiated; yet the gross Extremes are as distinguishable as Light and Darkness; which, when mixed and blended together, are nevertheless not

to be distinguished precisely and accurately by the Human Eye, which cannot, in all Degrees of Light and Shade, measure the Quantities of each; tho' it can judge of the greater Degrees of each with the utmost Security.

So that when Virtue is said to be placed between Extremes, when it is called the *Golden Mean*, and a *strait and narrow Path*; when we would conceive or describe the Line of Duty, we must not imagine it to be a Mathematical Line; no, it must be of some Width, and drawn with some Coarseness and Rudeness for such Creatures as we are. Those Beings, whose Understandings are much larger than ours, and whose Affections are attended with less Frailty, their Rule of Duty must be much more particular; and very minute Circumstances of Action, as they may appear to us, may be grossly extreme in them. But in Mankind, it is sufficient if their Course be such

as does not lead them from the Mark, or set them backward. All Conduct, in which the further we proceed, the wider we are from it, must be extreme and immoderate; but where we are continually advancing towards the Point in view, tho' it be by slow Steps, and not in an absolutely straight Line; we are deemed virtuous. Our directest Road has some Turnings and Windings in it. Winged Beings may move with more Speed, and more Directness; they have none of our Obstacles in their Course. As for Man, he must be contented with the Conditions of his Nature; nay, he may be delighted with them, and ought to be thankful for them, seeing there is no Virtue required of him that is unsuitable to his Circumstances. His best endeavours, tho' they do not succeed, are accepted, as if they did; and Repentance atones for his Deviations.

So

So that by *Moderation*, we are not so much to understand, the critical Observation of a precise and Mathematical Mean, as the avoiding, as much as we can, all Extremes; all things which appear to be Extremes to us.

Thus when we would describe a Man who is moderate in Eating and Drinking, we do not say that he weighs all his Provisions, or that he supplies his Body by Drams and Scruples, or lives like *Sanctorius* in a Scale; no, this we should condemn as a very great Extreme, as a Conduct wholly unsuitable to the common Circumstances of Mankind; but a moderate Man in this Particular, is one who avoids the gross Extremes of Surfeiting and Drunkenness on the one hand, and Penury on the other; who maintains an ordinary Course of Temperance in his Station and Circumstances of Life. The same is it in all other Particulars of Moderation.

Virtue

Virtue has of late Years been treated in a new Manner; we hear now of nothing but the Truth of things, of the abstract Reasons and Relations of things, as the Rule of all Free Action. It must be allow'd that this is a curious Entertainment for some few refin'd Heads; but it must be allowed also, that it is by no means a proper Method to teach Virtue to the Bulk of Mankind. It supposes them to be what they are not, *pure Intelligences*; whereas they have neither Leisure nor Capacity to be always philosophizing upon these Relations. And to expect from Men a Mathematical Conformity to the Reasons of things, thro' their whole Conduct, would be as absurd, as to enjoin them, heavy and giddy Creatures, to cross the Ocean upon a Thread. Was it not for *Repentance*, and *Faith in God*, the Reasons of things would serve only to condemn and torment us.

Ano-

Moderation stated and explained.

Another Set of Men treat us, as if we had *no Intelligence at all*; as if we were mere Machines, a Composition of Passions without any Power to direct them.

When therefore we say, That *Moderation* consists in observing the *Mean* or Middle-course in all the Particulars of our Conduct, a very strict and rigorous Mean, such as might be expected from mere Intelligences, is not to be understood; but such only as suits the Circumstances of Human Nature, our weak Capacities, and the various Temptations we are exposed to. He who considers and avoids the grossest Extremes, will soon improve his Capacity and his Strength, to discern and avoid those that are less gross, and will every Day be contracting his Path of Duty, and making it more direct; tho' perhaps no Observation or Diligence will ever make it absolutely so; however, the nearer we approach

approach to it, the more perfect we are; but at last the Saying of the Apostle will be true, *In many things we offend all.*

This then is the *Moderation* which we must make *known unto all Men*, which we must observe upon all Occasions, in all the Relations and Circumstances of our Life; in things which regard ourselves, as we are sensible Creatures, Rational and Social, in our Eating and Drinking, Sleep and Exercise; in our Dress and Ornaments; in the Improvement and Cultivation of our Minds; in our Friendships and Commerce with the World; in our Entertainments, in our Traffick, in our Charity, in our Resentments, in our Ambition; in the Love of our Country, of our Neighbour, and ourselves: In all these there are certain Excesses and Defects, which we should always be careful to avoid, which, as was before prov'd, cannot

cannot be particularly and minutely describ'd; they vary according to the different Circumstances and Capacities of every single Person; the same Actions which are moderate and decent in one Person, are excessive and defective in others; we cannot tell exactly where the Defect ends, or the Extreme begins. In things which relate immediately to ourselves, it is better to come short, than to exceed; in things which relate to others, in Matters of Friendship, of Honour, or of Charity, the Danger lies on the other Side, and to exceed is better than to be deficient. We must find out the Middle-path, every one for ourselves, as well as we can; and if we will employ our Thoughts in this Way, we cannot greatly miss of it.

The ancient Moralists used to enforce the Practice of Virtue, from the Beauty and Amiability, the present Utility and Advantage of it, and
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most excellent Things have they left us, in this way. We find St. Paul urging these Motives in the Chapter of my Text, almost in their own Words, *Finally, Brethren, says he, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, or venerable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good Report; if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think on these things.* Now every Act of Immoderation has in it some Deformity; there appears to the first View a Disproportion and Unfitness, and it raises the Disapprobation and Aversion of Beholders: Besides this, it is also disadvantageous, it is unnatural and painful, as well as unamiable; so that if we look no further than the present Nature and Tendencies of our Actions, we shall find every thing discourages Immoderation. All gross Excesses and De-

fects are odious to others, and painful to ourselves. And 'tis in all Instances, thro' mere Ignorance and want of Judgment, with some violent Passion at the Bottom, that we fall into them. They can never be the Objects of a free and deliberate Choice.

Plutarch has observ'd, That every Vice or Extreme wholly deserves the End it has in View; and that every End of Vice, every Good, or Pleasure, or Interest propos'd, is not to be obtain'd, but by the very opposite Virtue. This Observation is generally true. The Pleasures of Sloth are to be obtain'd only by Industry, of Luxury by Temperance, of Pride by Humility, of Dissimulation by Veracity, &c. The *Greek* Word which we translate *Sin*, signifies a *missing the Mark*, a *wrong Aim*, which is the Cause of Sin in all its Branches; which is attended with Deformity, Discredit and

and Misery, in all its Aims after Reputation, Pleasure, and Profit. God is said to *turn the Ways of the Wicked upside down*, a very strong, proper, and strictly Philosophical Expression in this View.

But after all, the Motive in my Text, is by much the best adapted to the generality of Mankind; *the Lord is at hand*. There are but few Persons who consider the Decency and Beauty, or *Decorum* of Actions, or the Advantages and Pleasures of them. All Men have, indeed, a View to these things, but they do not *consider* them; their Views are short and confin'd, and they *consider* them not upon the whole, in their more remote Consequences. They are captivated by the present Good, and their Enquiries into what will follow are thereby prevented and precluded. Now what the State and Circumstances of Mankind require, is

some certain and strong Prospect in Futurity, of Weight and Importance enough to awe and restrain them in their present Pursuits; something of Universal Influence, some general Check to Vice and Inconsideration, in all their Shapes and Forms. It is plain enough, that the Motives before do not come up to this Purpose. Let us then consider That in my Text, *The Lord is at hand.*

Death has been always known to be a *certain* Thing, at an *uncertain* Time. But what was to follow has been very much doubted of and disputed. Two Sects, the *Epicureans* and *Stoicks*, generally denied any Existence after it; the third Sect, the *Academicks*, generally believ'd the Immortality of the Soul; but they seldom deduce any Motives to the Practice of Virtue from this Topick. Now the great Strength and Force of Revelation lies in this, that it gives

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us the clearest Evidence of an Eternity of Existence after this Life, of the most exquisite Happiness or Misery; that our eternal State will be determined by our Conduct in this World; that Jesus Christ is ordain'd of God to be Judge of Quick and Dead. This, I say, is a Motive of the greatest Force, and most extensive Influence; it affects all Men of all Ranks and Degrees, of all Abilities and Capacities. It is appointed for all Men once to die, and after that the Judgment. The one is no more to be evaded than the other. If the present Rewards of Virtue are not sufficient to support it amongst Mankind, what can be called in to its Assistance more powerful than this Superaddition of eternal Rewards?

The Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, is very angry with St. Paul for exciting People to the Practice of Piety and all good Works, from this Motive;

Motive; a heinous Charge indeed ! it might have been commendable in another Person, but in an Apostle, is never to be forgiven.

But to return : The Behaviour of a Creature, who is to exist but for a short time, may be worth but little Notice, be it what it will, he passes away, is gone and forgotten ; but the Conduct of a Being who is to live for ever, is of the utmost Importance, especially that part of his Conduct, which is to determine his Happiness or Misery for ever ; this is of no less than infinite Value to him. And if this will not prevail with us, it is absolutely impossible that any thing in Nature should, because nothing in Nature greater than this can be proposed to us. Here is no need of Art or Oratory, no need of any Address to the Imagination or Affections, the plain Importance of this Motive, its genuine Worth and Magnificence must sub-

subdue our best Judgment, and is far above, and wants none of these little Helps. We must know within our selves, that in all our Excesses, we have no Thought of, or Regard to a future State; and that we no sooner admit the awful Idea, the *Lord is at hand*, but its Influence immediately takes place, it checks every Extravagance, and inspires an universal Moderation.

End of the Second VOLUME.





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